

ARNOLD WATERLOW :
A LIFE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE COMBINED MAZE

THE THREE SISTERS

ANNE SEVERN AND THE FIELDINGS

KITTY TAILLEUR

UNCANNY STORIES

MR. AND MRS. NEVILLE TYSON

TWO SIDES OF A QUESTION

THE HELPMATE

THE THREE BRONTËS

THE CREATORS

A CURE OF SOULS

Arnold Waterlow

A Life :: By MAY SINCLAIR

*Author of "A Cure of Souls," "Anne Severn and
the Fieldings," etc. :: :: :: ::*

SIXTH EDITION

LONDON: HUTCHINSON & CO.

FATERNOSTER ROW

1915

To
APHRA WILSON

Arnold Waterlow: A Life

I

HE was all by himself in the room. It seemed to him that he had been left an everlasting time alone. Not that he minded that in the very least. For Martha had turned on the light before she left him, and when you are all by yourself in it a room is much more amusing than when there are other people there. Nobody interferes with you and you discover things. He had just discovered the bird-cage in the sky.

It was all black outside behind the window, and the bird-cage with its band of yellow gauze hung there as a Chinese lantern hangs. It looked exactly like the bird-cage that hung inside the room before the window, yellow gauze band and all, and it had a yellow canary in it all hunched upon his perch exactly like the canary in the room. And in the sky beyond the bird-cage two yellow lights burned in the blackness like the lights inside the room above the table.

But after a time he got tired of looking at them.

He didn't mind being left there alone. What he minded was the door being shut.

He wanted to get out.

He was not yet three years old and to him it was reasonable and natural that bird-cages should hang in the sky from nothing at all, while a plain nursery door remained a monstrous and inexplicable thing. The door-handle was above his head. Only by standing on tiptoe and straining his body till it ached, by stretching his arms till the armpits yawned, could he contrive to clasp the large, white knob. He had never yet succeeded in turning it.

But he had not yet desired to turn it. Not with a like passion and a like decision. His body quivered. His hands slipped on the large smooth knob.

He began all over again. He stretched higher. He strained harder. His body stiffened. His hands closed tighter on the knob.

This time it turned. He had turned it.

He stood on the landing at the head of the stairs. Abrupt and perilous, the staircase opened and fell away in front of him. At his feet, from the edge of the topmost stair, it slanted horribly to the hall.

He grasped a banister to steady himself as he looked down. A sharp, sweet terror went through him. He stretched out one foot into space and drew it back again and waited. Then (tentatively) he dipped his toes and sounded the depth of the first stair. It was too deep. There were risks that he was not prepared to take.

Then he had an idea.

He let go of the banister and bent himself forward so that his little petticoats flew out from the clean curve of his white drawers behind. That part of him felt deliciously free and competent and safe. Very gravely and earnestly he seated himself on the edge of the topmost stair. Pushing off with his heels and rocking forwards and backwards, by his own impetus he travelled from stair to stair, still sitting, and going bump, bump till he reached the bottom.

There was something almost agreeable in the shock of the bumps. They were not felt as a pain in his body. His body was no longer he, or even a part of him ; it was a little carriage that he propelled by his rocking. He himself sat in it at his ease and it carried him downwards in an ecstasy of foreign travel. He had forgotten the bird-cage in the sky ; he had forgotten his struggle with the door-knob ; an immense period of time separated him from his helpless infancy. He was thrilled, exquisitely, with the freedom and danger of the descent.

There was nobody in the hall when he got there.

Till then he had had no plan. Now, in the silence and emptiness of the hall it was borne in on him what he had to do. He was going into the room where nobody was allowed to go. Not even Charlotte. Not even Richard. He chuckled as he thought of this incomparable iniquity.

The door of the room was shut. But he had power over door-knobs now. It yielded. After the least possible tip-toeing and straining and slippery struggling (for the mat had

raised him a good half-inch) it yielded. He discovered that it was easier to enter a room than to get out of it ; the door even obliged him by flying wide open at his push.

Then he stood still in the doorway, sniffed and stared.

A little cloud of thin smoke came writhing up from a great chair by the fireplace. The spaces of the room were grey with it and he smelt a queer, bitter smell. And there was a man in the room. He sat in the middle of the smoke and his face was turned towards the door. The great chair hid all of him but his face and his white hands and the book they held. He had an immense fire in front of him, and a lamp with a bright green shade stood beside him on a stand. His head was turned queerly round the edge of the chair, and there was something in his mouth that the smoke came from. He was wonderful.

There were other things in the room, bookshelves ; dark red curtains ; a case of stuffed birds ; a round table covered with a velvet cloth ; and another smell that crept through the smoke and was odd in a room of such size and opulence. And over the chimney-piece was the picture of a great ship in full sail cutting through a green sea. He did not notice these things all at once. He saw nothing except the man and his face and the smoke that came from him. Particularly his face. It was as white as his hands ; he had a black beard and a black moustache and whiskers, and hair like a black cap with curly tufts at the sides sticking out over his ears. In spite of this blackness he looked white because his forehead was so big. And under it he had steel-black eyes ; and as Baby stared at him they stared at Baby ; they moved like little balls ; they pushed his eyebrows up his forehead, and great white rings came out round them as they did it.

Baby stood still by the doorway and stared. He too was dark and white, like the man, much too like the man to be a pretty baby. And yet he was delicious. He looked absurd and heartrending in his wide, stiff petticoats. And his hair was curled in a Thames tunnel along the top of his head. (He had been very quiet that evening while he was being dressed, and it was the best Thames tunnel that Martha had ever made.) He was not in the least frightened by the little moving balls ; he thought them funny. So he stared.

It was as if he and the man were trying to see which would keep it up longer.

Then he remembered. He put out his finger and pointed at the man in the room and said, " Papa." He said it to himself,

very softly and pensively, exactly as he said "lion," or "tiger," when he put his finger on the animals in his "Child's Natural History Book."

The man in the room said, "Go away, Sir!" (just as if he had never seen that Baby was delicious and absurd and heart-rending).

And Baby smiled his smile of adorable wisdom, and said it again: "Papa," to show how right he was.

"Did you hear me tell you to go away, Sir?"

Baby said, "Yett."

"Then go!"

Quietly and slowly and with great dignity, as it were in his own good time, Baby went. He had immense trouble with the door. He could pull it to on his toes, but he couldn't shut it. He could only rattle the knob. The Papa had to get up and do it for him. He did it with a great violence and noise.

A door overhead opened suddenly and shut again.

Mamma came down the stairs as Baby was climbing up them on his hands and knees. Mamma stood still when she saw him. She looked frightened; but Baby didn't see that look. He only saw the shining of her face and neck and of her brown-gold hair, two sleek bands parted on the forehead and a bunch of curls hanging over each ear. Her pink silk skirts stood out over the great hoops of her crinoline and filled the staircase. As Baby climbed higher they stuck out and covered him so that he couldn't see her face any more, only her feet in the white stockings and pink slippers. She stooped and picked him up in her arms just as he was saying to himself, "Papa. Papa," all over again so that he mightn't forget it.

She hugged him so tight that scent came out of her bodice as it comes out of a valentine when you squeeze it.

"Oh, Baby!" she said, "did you go into Papa's room?"

"Yett."

"But that was naughty."

"Yett."

"Why did you do it, then?"

He hid his face under her curls in the place where the scent came from.

And because Mamma could never leave anything to its own mystery she put him down and set him on his feet at the head of the staircase where their eyes met, and said to him, "Now, Arnold, look at me. Tell Mamma why."

At that first evocation of his name, the unforgotten wisdom in him looked at her and said, "'Cause——"

II

It must have been somebody's birthday, Richard's or Charlotte's, for the three children were sitting up for dessert, and Mamma had come down again, dressed in her pink silk gown, to play with them in the drawing-room.

The drawing-room was a place of curious adventure where you came upon incredible things : black sofas and cabinets and tables that were all holes in a lace-work of fruit and flowers (they had sailed in one of Papa's ships from India) ; boxes lined with wood that had a queer, sweet smell ; a shiny black chair inlaid with a mother-o'-pearl bird-of-paradise roosting in a tree of mother-o'-pearl. And grass-green velvet everywhere, soft, yet agreeably stiff to the finger like the fur on the cat's nose. And when the curtains of fine damask moved sombrely across the windows you had a delicious thrill of fright. There was something mysterious and inimical about the movement of the curtain, the loosening of the cords, the sudden shriek of the rings, and the unfolding of the secret, intolerable scene, the dreadful brown and grey efflorescence of the claret-coloured curtains. As they moved from the walls they turned into branches that plucked at you, leaves that pointed, ghostly and enormous flowers that shook out grey faces at you and were hidden again.

Arnold took care to watch this transformation from the middle of the hearth-rug which was a long way off and safe.

It must have been Richard's birthday, for nobody had taken any notice of Arnold except to tell him not to touch the toys.

(Only Martha had seemed to consider him of importance as she curled his hair round her fingers to make the Thames tunnel, and tied up his sleeves with blue ribbon and spread out his wide blue sash.)

But he was happy, wandering adventurously in the room,

stroking the bird-of-paradise, putting his fingers through the holes in the Indian furniture, and gathering up handfuls of the long, silky white hair of the hearth-rug. (He loved the hearth-rug, having persuaded himself that it was a live animal.) He had been perfectly happy till he turned round suddenly and saw Mamma.

She stood in the middle of the room under the great glass chandelier with the tinkling, twinkling pendants. It hung from the ceiling by innumerable tinkling, twinkling chains of glass, it hung above her head in a circle like a canopy fringed with its glass pendants. And the whorl of her pink silk flounces flying out over the great crinoline made bigger and bigger circles to her feet. Then suddenly they began to spin round and round. They span faster and faster as her little feet danced invisibly under the hoops without ever moving from the circle.

Then suddenly she stopped spinning round and began to sink, lower and lower ; the whorl of her pink skirts swelled up round her till they sank too, and the hoops of the great crinoline collapsed and flattened, and all of Mamma from the waist downwards dwindled and dissolved in a pink ring on the floor.

Richard and Charlotte stamped for joy. They flung themselves on the little pink body that rose out of the ring and was all that was left of Mamma. They shouted, " Do it again, Mamma ! Do it again ! "

But Arnold (he was still sitting on his hearth-rug) burst out crying. To him there was something terrifying in that subsidence and disappearance of Mamma in the hoops of her crinoline.

And when she heard him cry she rose up and made herself tall again and came to him, the hoops of her crinoline swinging as she came. She stooped and gathered him in her arms and held him tight to her breast. He lay there, crying and shuddering with love and fear.

" What is it ? What is it, Army ? Tell Mamma what it is. "

He couldn't tell her. And she couldn't understand. So she kissed him and ran her finger through the Thames tunnel on the top of his head. (She was tender to Arnold because he was a little thing, but it was Richard that she loved.)

He was still sobbing when she carried him into the dining-room, and when she gave him (prematurely) his share of dessert : two fancy biscuits, and the juice of preserved ginger in his own christening spoon. Richard and Charlotte looked on.

" Isn't he silly ? " said Richard. He was seven.

" He can't help it. He's only a baby," said Charlotte. She was six.

She said it with her little air of superiority and kindness. Charlotte was always kind to Arnold ; but it was Richard that she adored.

III

MAMMA.

There was no mystery and wonder and fascination in the world like the fascination and wonder and mystery of Mamma. It might have worn off, perhaps, if she had been always there. But there were long bleak stretches of time when for Arnold she was simply not there at all.

A dozen times a day he would leave whatever he was doing and come to Martha with his imperious cry : " Where's Mamma ? I want her." And Martha had always the same answer : " You'll have to wait, then. You can't have her." She had several different ways of saying it. Sometimes she was severe and determined ; sometimes she was teasing and cajoling ; sometimes she was tender, sometimes she was sick and tired of hearing him, and sometimes she was downright angry. You could never tell which of these things Martha was going to be ; but they came to the same thing in the end. He couldn't have Mamma. She wasn't there. She was busy ; she was out paying calls ; she had company ; she was with Papa.

That was all very well ; but half the time he knew she was with Charlotte and Richard.

He gathered that it was the great age of Charlotte and of Richard that procured them this communion.

It seemed to him that he passed ages and ages in longing for Mamma and in the vain pursuit of her. He was for ever struggling with doors that had shut on her, or climbing stairs whose turnings hid her from him again. He was profoundly troubled by these disappearances.

Only at night when the fire burned in the grate behind the diamond network of the fireguard, and great bars and cross-bars swayed on the ceiling and stood still and disappeared, sometimes an immense shadow would swamp the network of the bars, and

her face, between the bunches of curls that tickled him, would hang for a blessed minute over the railing of his cot while she kissed him. Then he would catch at her gold watch-chain and hold her, and she would loose his fingers very gently one by one. Her shadow moved from the ceiling and the great bars swayed over it again and she was gone.

Then one day he too had a birthday. He was three years old.

IV

MAMMA was sitting with her feet on the line of steel fortifications that was the dining-room fender.

She was very still.

Not a trace of the person in pink silk, of the terrifying, magic thing that had whirled round and round under the glass chandelier on Richard's birthday. She was dressed in her purple poplin (a dark and solemn purple). Her body was still ; her feet, in black velvet boots (how could they ever have danced so madly ?), her feet, supported by the steel rampart, were still ; the two bunches of curls that the least movement fluttered, were supernaturally still. Between them, her face, with its sharp, exquisite features, was fixed in a stillness that was somehow not tranquillity. Her prettiness, her small, child-like charm was drawn and coerced to a strange gravity maintained by a prodigious effort of the will.

By another effort her arms, her slender, child-like arms, held up a book furnished with gilt clasps and long, pointed hinge-pieces clamped down with great studs on to the leather. Every now and then she closed her eyes, and her lips moved like the lips of a child learning by heart.

It was nine o'clock in the morning and Mamma was reading the Lesson for the Day.

Arnold sat on the crenelated parapet of the fender and watched her doing it. There wasn't a chance that she would speak to him, or acknowledge his presence by so much as a smile or the raising of her eyelids. He was fascinated by the mystery of her stillness. He had gathered from Charlotte that when Mamma sat like that with her heavy book in her arms something of importance was going on between her and God, and that he must on no account interrupt them. Presently, when it was all over, she would turn and look at him, and her

lips, as if they still tried to hold the words that had escaped her, would waver in a mournful, tender smile.

That smile announced to him her return to earth.

In time, after repeated experiences of it, he conceived the idea that Mamma's communion with God was not an entirely happy thing. He was always glad when it was over, for then the chances were that she would take him on her knee and kiss him and run her finger through his Thames tunnel.

But then, just as he had got her and the bliss was beginning, Richard and Charlotte would come in and spoil it all. They had cruel advantages over him, Charlotte with her hymn and Richard with his psalm. As soon as they came in she put him down to play with his bricks on the floor all by himself, while she gathered them close to her, one on each side. Charlotte, with her pale snub face and the two plaits of her flaxen hair crossed at the nape of her neck and secured under each ear with a bunch of brown ribbon, Charlotte in her wide stiff skirts was, from the white frills of her drawers upwards, a minute grown-up person.

She chanted, "There is a green hill far away" in a loud voice, with arrogance and her air of superior uprightness and efficiency.

Richard, the beautiful boy, sullen and insolent in his beauty, leaned against Mamma and stammered through the first three verses of "The Lord is my Shepherd" with a shamefaced reluctance, and then stopped.

Arnold looked up and filled in Richard's pause with his own text: "God is love." He said it in a hurried and perfunctory manner (for it was staled to him by repetition) and went on with the tower he was building.

"There," said Richard, "he's been and put me out."

Mamma made a great effort to be just. "If you knew your psalm as well as he knows his text——"

"He didn't say it revelantly, Mamma," said Charlotte, "and he said it out of his turn."

"Go on, Richard," said Mamma. She was trying to look severe, but she never would have succeeded if Arnold's tower hadn't toppled and come to the ground with a crash.

"I can't go on," said Richard, "when he's knocking his horrid towers down all the time."

"I didn't knock it. It felled down," said Arnold, and built it up again. (He was always building.)

And slowly, with many pauses, the psalm went on till Richard

admitted, in an extremity of shame, that he would "dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." And when Charlotte and he were settled with their copy-books far away at the other side of the table, Arnold rose from the superb tower that he was then building and climbed on to his mother's knee. He was sorry for saying his text irreverently and out of his turn, and he wanted to make up for it.

"I've got somefing to tell you, Mamma. It's a sekwet," and Mamma bowed her head.

He whispered joyously in her left ear: "God is love," and joyously again in her right: "God is love." Then he laughed softly.

"Arnold, that's very naughty. Mamma must take your bricks away from you."

And she took them.

Arnold turned his back on her and stared out of the window, thoughtfully, as if he were saying to himself that in this affair of religion one may have no luck.

V

OUTSIDE on the lawn before the window the peacock spread his tail and screamed to Arnold to come out and look at him.

To get away, out of the room, out of the house, to go, all by himself, into the garden where the peacock was calling to him, that was what he wanted.

The side wall of the house was blank except for a little window in the gable of the roof and for the fine, grooved lines, one above the other in the white stucco. From the porch to the slope of the garden a straight flagged path went along under the white wall. Arnold stood on the path and stared up at the wall. He had to tilt his head as far back as it would go to find the little window in the gable of the roof. (Something surely would be looking out at him there.)

And as he stared the fine grooved lines began to move upwards, running together like lines in water, and the immense white wall leaned towards him and swayed. The whole house leaned towards him and swayed. It threatened to fall on him and crush him. It did this as often as his eyes followed the moving courses of the parallel lines as they ran into each other and went upwards. And yet it did not fall. Arnold was fascinated by the swaying and leaning forward of the house. He waited. He wanted to see what would happen next. It was his first experience of a world that is always pretending to do what it never really does, whose menace and hostility he could defy.

The peacock spread his tail and screamed to him to come and look at him. And Arnold stood there on the flagged path and waited, watching the house that was about to fall on him and never fell.

VI

AN immense period of time.

VII

IN secret he was sure that it had happened.

The Esplanade goes on and on beside the river from East Ferry to West Ferry. When they pushed you through the white wicket-gate at the beginning you had to go on and on with the Esplanade till you came to the white wicket-gate at the end. On one side of you the grey palissade went up to the sky, and on the other the wall of the Esplanade went down, naked, without a parapet, to the river. You walked on the grey causeway in danger. And in that greyness and straightness and in the never-ending length of the causeway and of the river and of the palissade there was an unspeakable fascination.

He was about four years old when he discovered the doors in the palissade.

Secret doors that opened and shut without door-knobs, hardly distinguishable from the palissade. Whichever end he started at he had to count every door up to seven, for the horror of their mystery increased, and culminated with the seventh door. Once he had passed the seventh door he was safe. But there was always the fear that he might have missed one, because the number six was apt to escape him. Six was the sort of shapeless, pulpy number that had no attraction for him, so he always had difficulty in holding on to it, and when it had once given him the slip he was done for and had to start all over again.

That was why he was always naughty at the wicket-gate and refused to speak when he was spoken to. For when they spoke to him it put him out in his calculation, and he had to run back and count the doors all over again to make sure. And then Martha would turn and run after him to catch him and there would be a struggle. Thus naughtiness was created new every day for him at one or other of the wicket-gates. He couldn't

explain to Martha nor yet to Richard or to Charlotte the terrible compulsion that was on him to count the doors.

There had been trouble with Martha that morning, and he had traversed the whole length of the causeway from East Ferry to West Ferry apart in the mournful isolation of his sin. They had passed through the far wicket-gate on their return and he, as usual, had lost count. He was approaching the seventh door when it happened.

He was first of all aware of something tremendous going on in the sky. Where the river ran into the sky an enormous mounded wall, of an unstained and shining and unearthly whiteness, stood up and was continued above the tree-tops of Eastham woods and the slate roofs of East Ferry. Here and there passages and hollows of a greyish-blue colour had been made in it. The river crept into the sky through some such secret way under the foot of the wall.

It stood fast in a great majesty and stillness. Then, of a sudden, the whole immense mass began to move. It parted asunder at the top and, as if it had wings, it was lifted up and carried over the sky.

At the first giving way of the sky-wall something in Arnold's head shifted and gave way.

He couldn't have passed the seventh door yet ; but he didn't care. He had forgotten all about the seventh door. He stood still, all by himself, in the middle of the causeway, looking up.

" Whatever is the matter with that child ? " said Martha. " What's he staring at *now* ? What do you think you see ? "

" God," said Arnold.

He saw him without any surprise. The thing was entirely natural and simple. He quivered with the excitement of it as he had sometimes quivered when he heard his mother's voice suddenly or saw her face.

In secret he was sure of it.

" Don't you know the sun when you see it ? " said Martha.

" Yes," said Arnold.

" Then what did you say you saw ? "

" I said I saw God. So I did."

" Where ? "

" Up yere. He was looking at me."

" It was the sun you saw and you know it."

" It wasn't. He was yere before the sun came."

If only the sun could have waited and not rushed out just at that minute to put him in the wrong !

"What's the row about ?" said Richard.

He had been walking on in front and pretending that he had nothing to do with Martha. For Richard was nine now, much too old to go out with Martha, almost too old to go out with Mamma. But he had turned back to see what Arnold had been up to.

And there were some people walking on the Esplanade who had stopped to look on, too.

"He says he saw *God*," said Charlotte in her voice of shocked integrity.

"It's likely you'd see God," said Martha. "A naughty little boy such as you."

"Yat's what I saw," said Arnold.

And they all three stood round him and tried to make him say he hadn't seen what he did see.

Richard was magnanimous and would have let the matter drop. "He's such a silly baby," said Richard. "What does it matter what he says ?" Martha was inclined on the whole to the same view. It was Charlotte who told Mamma.

And Mamma came to him when he was all alone in the nursery. Her pretty pink face between the two bunches of curls was sad as if somebody had hurt her.

She said, "Now, Arny, tell Mamma what you saw."

He told her.

She shook her head at him. "You mustn't say those naughty things."

"But I *did*. Mamma, I did see him."

"Say it again," said Mamma, "and I'll send you to bed."

He said it again. He said, "I don't care if you do send me to bed. I can't say I didn't see him ven I did. It wouldn't be twoof."

"Hush ! No one has ever seen him," said Mamma.

"Hasn't Uncle Edward nor Aunt Sarewah ? Nor Cousin Edie, nor Marfa, nor Charlotte—nor Wichard ?"

"No, Arny."

"Hasn't Papa ?"

"No. Not even Papa."

"Hasn't no one seen him ? No one but *me* ?"

"No one."

"Haven't you, Mamma ?"

"No."

"Then," said Arnold, "don't you wiss you was me?"

He knew he was naughty now, and he rejoiced and exulted in his naughtiness.

They put him to bed. He had not asked or received forgiveness from Mamma, yet he lay there in perfect happiness, absolved from sin. He said to himself, "I don't care. I know I saw God."

VIII

AFTER this his mother began to teach him as she had taught Richard and Charlotte. She said to herself, "He's only a little thing, but he must be made to distinguish between truth and falsehood. More particularly in matters of religion."

Religion came first. He had a new text to say now : "Thou God seest me" (Mamma was merciful and had given him another easy one) ; and then after her, earnestly and solemnly, he said his hymn, "Gentle Jesus" ; or, still earnestly but with rather less solemnity because it was not a hymn but a moral song :

" ' Day by day the 'ittle daisy
Looks up wiv its yellow eye,
Never murmuwing, never wissing
It were hanging up on high.' "

For Mamma wished to destroy in Arnold and in Charlotte the seeds of vanity and ambition.

She read aloud to him from the "Peep of Day," and from a bright orange-coloured book called "More About Jesus," and from a little paper book which Arnold liked because there was a picture of a lion on the first page. Arnold's mind received and preserved for ever the images of a great mass of clouds in which apparently the world had its beginning, and of a great lake of fire and brimstone in which it apparently had its end, and of the devil as a roaring lion going about seeking what he might devour. Apparently it was Arnold that he wanted, though he was ready to snap up anything that came his way while he was looking for him. But Arnold had played at lion-hunting with Richard too many times to be afraid of the devil. These things were no less vague to him and far less terrible than the images of dreams, and he gave to them only a dreamlike and vanishing belief. Through them there moved with a superior

reality the form of a man, utterly courageous, utterly pitiful, who loved little children, who wore a crown of thorns and suffered incomprehensible tortures in order that Arnold should be saved from his sins.

After the mysteries, his secular education began. Martha had already taught him to know his right hand from his left, and to count his ten fingers and his ten toes. He had nothing to learn from Mamma but his A B C.

You would have thought that was simple. But no ; by the end of the first week of it Mamma had made up her mind that Arnold was a very stupid little boy. He stuck fast in the beginning of the alphabet.

" Say it very slowly and distinctly after me," she said every morning. She was careful to separate each letter from the rest so that there might be no doubt about them. And very slowly and distinctly he had said each letter after her. And the next morning he had forgotten every one except *a*, *b* and *c*.

Then all of a sudden at bedtime, when nothing of the sort was expected of him, he amazed her by rattling off the whole alphabet at once, so fast that she couldn't follow him.

He had picked up from Charlotte the rhythm that keeps it in your head. And very soon, in his play-time, on the sly and with an almost sinful ease, he had learnt his letters by sight ; immense black letters each printed on a shiny white slab. You set the slabs up in rows between grooved ledges fixed on a board. He was made to understand that the board and the letters and the brown wooden box that contained them were sacred things, and that it was only by extraordinary favour that he was permitted to take them out and play with them.

They belonged to Richard.

Sometimes Mamma would come and stand over him when he was playing, and bid him point out some letter that she would choose at random. She would say, " Little *k*. Quick, quick ! You shouldn't have to think twice about it." And he would instantly forget the little *k* and all the others ; and the board with the rows that he had set up on it would appear to him as a strange object encountered for the first time, and of the letters he knew so well he would see nothing but black marks swimming on a white ground. He would point to one of them at random. And Mamma would say, " That's not knowing your letters." (It was Martha who had told her that he knew them.) She knew that she was right, after all, and that little Arny was a stupid boy.

He *looked* stupid as he stood by the board and brooded over the letters, trying, all by himself, to recapture the secret of their charm. And she would shake her head at him and go away.

The letters, though he knew every one of them by name and form, were mysterious to him ; it was their mystery that enchanted him. At first each appeared to him as an isolated existence detached unintelligibly from its fellows and from every other object in the world ; then, later, he became aware of them as standing for he knew not what. It was as if he alone knew that they stood for something, for an existence more secret and mysterious than their own. This fascination of the black letters endured for a long while. They had personalities, splendid or abominable, that attracted or repelled him. He detested B and W. He admired and was a little afraid of Z. And when they were all jumbled together on the floor he could almost feel his way through to R, S, and V, so drawn was he by the beauty and distinction of their forms.

Then one day Mamma bought him a picture alphabet, so that his knowledge should be a reality and not a pretence. To make it easy for him the pictures were large and coloured.

It began in peace and tenderness.

In summer they sat together on the big sofa in the dining-room window. In winter (for the long agony of it lasted on into the winter) he drew his little chair beside her in front of the steel fortifications. Then the trouble began. He couldn't and he wouldn't believe Mamma when she told him that D stood for Dog and H for Horse, or that they had anything to do with each other. He loved the Dog and the Horse in themselves ; he could even spend a long time with them in perfect happiness. But the coloured pictures were one thing and his beloved letters were another ; they stood for something different from what the book said and from what Mamma said. Something that, while it withdrew from him in the presence of the pictures, yet remained mysterious and majestic. He hated and feared the lessons that came between him and everything he cared for.

They came between him and his happy secret play. They came between him and Mamma. Every day his passion for her was tricked and cheated. Every day he was lured to the lesson by the prospect of having her, as Charlotte and Richard had had her, for an endless time to himself. And every day he went through the same atrocious experience. One moment he was in bliss, pressed close against her, touched by her hair, penetrated by her sweet scent ; her arm might even be round him and her

face bent to him in love ; and the next he would be cast off and separated from her by his sin.

Every now and then he would stoop down and kiss her darling foot in its black velvet boot that rested on the edge of the steel rampart. Sometimes her foot would be all that was left to him of Mamma, she was withdrawn so far from him. And when even the black velvet boot began to tap with impatience on the fender, he knew that he was utterly abandoned. His sin would come upon him suddenly when he wasn't thinking of it, when he wasn't really thinking of anything but his pretty Mamma, and it would have such power over him that he would forget her prettiness and his love for her. And the lesson would end in tears ; Arnold crying from mystification and misery, and Mamma crying from sheer exhaustion.

It had not been so with Richard or with Charlotte ; it was not so now. Every day Richard went to Miss Peppercorn's school and returned from it without any complaint from Miss Peppercorn. Every day Miss Rodick came to give Charlotte her lessons and went away without shedding tears. Charlotte was good, and Mamma was rather afraid she was going to be clever ; and though Richard was not perhaps very clever, Mamma was quite sure he was going to be good. Whereas Arnold was naughty as well as stupid. She said to herself she didn't so much mind his being stupid because he couldn't help it ; but he could perfectly well help being naughty. And she wondered why it was so.

Neither of them knew why.

At last he couldn't bear it any longer. He had to be reconciled to her at any cost. So when Mamma asked him for the two hundred and forty-seventh time, "What does A stand for ? Quick !" He said, "Ass. It doesn't weally, you know, but I'll say it like that if it'll p'ease you."

And he went on saying it like that every day, from A to Z, till he forgot that the letters had ever stood for anything else, and when he took them out of the brown box to play with them he no longer felt their fascination and their mystery.

One day he asked her, "Need I do it any more ? I know my letters now."

And she said, "You can say them like a little parrot, if that's knowing them. *Now* you must learn to read."

It was a long time before Arnold learned to read. He had great difficulty in remembering even such simple syllables as

ab, and ad, and de (because, he said, they didn't mean anything—as if, Mamma said, anybody was asking him what they meant).

Then, when she had grown resigned to his stupidity and was very gentle and forbearing with it, suddenly one morning he startled her again.

She had just said, "You must learn a new hymn to-day. Say 'There is a green hill far away——'"

"But I *know* yat one," said Arnold.

"Arny—you do *not*."

"I do—twoolly."

"Then say it—through."

And in a clear and beautiful voice, without stumbling or hesitation, he said it through.

"I see. Martha's been teaching you."

"No. It wasn't Marfa. I always wemember yat one. And yere's anovver one I wemember—'The Lord is my Shepherd.'"

"Arny—that's Richard's psalm. And *he* couldn't remember it when he was your age."

"I wemember it. I'll say it if it'll p'ease you. But I'd wather not."

And he said it in the same beautiful and clear voice.

"'Yea, though I walk fwoo the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil. . . .'"

She had never known that Arnold's voice could be so beautiful and clear. "Did you always know that too?" she said.

"I *yink* I did."

"Charlotte didn't help you? Or Richard?"

He shook his head slowly. He had forgotten Charlotte and Richard.

"Try and think."

"I *am* yinking." But he was thinking of his mother's face.

"Richard said it to you, didn't he?"

Her face was turned to him sharply and slantwise so that he only saw one eye and the tip of her nose. The rest was curls.

He remembered.

"No, Mamma. He said it to you."

"Well, Charlotte then." (Her voice was sharp. She thought he was shuffling.)

"No. Charlotte didn't say 'The Lord is my Shepherd.' *She* said 'Yere is a green hill.'"

Mamma's pretty pink face was pinker than ever. She turned it away and hid it in her curls. "Poor little Arny," she thought, "so he wasn't shuffling, after all." She tried to reckon how

long ago it was since they had stood one on each side of her, Charlotte saying her hymn and Richard his psalm, while Arnold played with his bricks on the floor. Arny wasn't much more than four now. He couldn't have been more than three then. Who would have dreamed that the baby had been listening all the time? It was very clear to Mamma that if Arnold could pick it all up like that from simply listening and remember every word perfectly, then Arnold was far more wonderful than Charlotte.

He was more wonderful than Richard.

"You're not p' eased wiv me, Mamma."

"Arny! What do you mean?"

He shook his head. "I yought it would p' ease you. And you are not p' eased."

She stooped and kissed him. "I'm afraid you are a very silly little boy."

Then another idea came to her. "If you thought it would please me, and if you knew it all the time, why didn't you come and say it to Mamma before?"

Arnold hung his head. "'Cause——"

"Well?—that's a baby word."

"Cause it hurts."

But he couldn't tell her why it hurt him. He was too young to know why.

She said to herself, "After all, it was *only* memory. He learns things like a little parrot."

IX

AND now he wanted always to be out of doors.

This longing was intolerable when the sun was hot and the smells of the garden drifted in through the open windows of the dining-room, and when the peacock came up to the top of the lawn and screamed. It was unkind to the peacock not to go to him when he screamed, not to turn and look at him when he curved his blue neck and spread out the great fan of his tail, and all its eyes opened wide in their shining rings.

He loved the peacock ; and more than the peacock he loved the sea-gull. For the sea-gull had a broken wing, and he stood for ever on one leg beside his shallow tank with all his feathers ruffled and his head sunk into his shoulders. Arnold felt that if only he could catch the sea-gull and hold him in his arms and stroke him, the sea-gull would be comforted. He felt that his suffering had a sanctity that would be outraged if he tried to catch him.

After the sea-gull and the peacock he loved the big lilac bushes in the garden and the laurels with their cold, polished leaves, pleasantly thick to the teeth and bitter to the tongue. He loved the flowers in the borders where you walked sedately, the flowers of his own height, the Canterbury bells and the snapdragons whose faces looked close into his own ; and the sweet peas that even he was allowed to pick, one or two at a time ; and the high roses that swung on their trees above his head, so high and so sacred that he might hardly look at them. Most of all he loved the small flowers that he had to stoop to ; they made him feel gigantic, the dandelions and the daisies, the buttercups and the ladies' slippers that grew in the wild parts of the lawn. You could pick as many of them as you wanted ; and it was there that you found the long, smooth, sweet blades of grass, and the strong, rough blades that cut your fingers like little saws.

Arnold Waterlow : A Life

As he watched his mother's delicate forefinger pointing the way through his lesson book, he longed for that world of splendid and mournful and lovely and inimical things.

It was worst when the wind blew and the river curled into waves that broke into white foam like the sea, and the little yachts rocked at their moorings, and their tall naked masts leaned and swayed with an unwilling, rigid gesture. The little yachts turned and tossed, they rolled in the wash of the paddle-steamers with an exaggeration of the insane, incessant movement.

He could talk about the yachts to Richard, for Richard always understood. He had moments of sudden unbending when you could count upon him to get you out of the garden, over the low wall and railing at the back of the shrubbery where you hid from Martha, and across the great ditch and through the hedge into the Dell.

Then, holding Richard's hand and pulled by Richard (who looked enormous in his checked knickerbockers), he was jerked and torn out of the short, scuttling run of infancy into manhood's large, pelting, striding race. For the first time in his existence he really ran. There was anguish and there was ecstasy in that running. The little pulpy arm that harnessed him to Richard's energy agonised in its socket ; his feet felt like hands that sprawled, his legs like weak arms flying in no defined direction ; at times his knees dissolved and sank like water ; twice he fell over himself ; and yet he ran. He could feel Richard's strength and Richard's velocity passing into him and becoming his strength and his velocity. It even felt as if his velocity exceeded Richard's.

And before Martha could turn round they were at the bottom of the Dell that led to the Ferry and the esplanade and the river where the yachts were.

Holding Richard's hand he stood at the very edge of the causeway to look over.

Next to Mamma he loved Richard.

X

THE *Buen' Juana* in full sail plunged through the green sea above the chimneypiece, bound for the East Indies. Arnold, mounted on Papa's shoulder, with one arm round Papa's head and Papa's hand holding him firmly by the ankles, was on board her as a cabin-boy. He pointed to her masts and named them ; he learned the number and the names of her sails.

" I am going to be a sailor when I am a man," he said.

After that, raised on two volumes of *Chambers's Journal*, he sat at Papa's table and looked at the pictures in *Hunt's Yachting Magazine*. Papa found for him the cutter yacht *Windward*, 45 tons, Royal Mersey Yacht Club. Owner, Mr. Joseph Waterlow, of East Ferry, Cheshire. He knew that Papa, *his* Papa, was the owner, Mr. Joseph Waterlow.

" When I am a man," he said, " I shall have yachts. I shall sail in them to India."

" Will you ! " said Papa.

" Yes, I shall," said Arnold. And he chose and marked for his own all the yachts in *Hunt's Yachting Magazine* that appealed to him by their build, their tonnage and their rig. This he did with the encouragement and approval of Papa.

Never before had he been taken into such favour. Never before had he been invited to enter that room. And as he sat there he was filled with a sense of peril and elation.

It had not been an entirely happy day. He had gone into the night nursery not long after tea and had found Richard there. (He and Richard shared the night nursery now and Charlotte slept with Martha in an inner room.)

Richard was undressing. His face was very red and he sobbed savagely as he tore off his clothes and flung them from him on the floor. He said, " Go away, you little devil." And Arnold had gone away at once and told Martha that Richard was ill. And Martha had said, " Don't *you* come fussing and interfering. You leave Master Richard alone."

Then he had gone downstairs to find Mamma, and he had come across Papa in the hall. And Papa had called him "a young opossum," and had taken him into the dining-room and given him cake out of the sideboard cupboard.

It was long after bedtime, and still Papa kept him with him in his room.

Mamma came and found him there.

"It's time Arnold was in bed," said Mamma.

"He'll not go to bed until I tell him," said Papa.

"Why have you taken him into favour so suddenly? What has he done?"

"He's done nothing. Nothing at all. That's why."

"Then what has Richard done to be punished, I should like to know?"

"He has contrived to be born," said Papa.

"You were born yourself," said Mamma.

"Not to the extent of being an abominable nuisance."

"How was he to know you were in the house? He thought you were at the office. Which," said Mamma, "is where you ought to have been."

"I suppose you told him that," said Papa with incisive bitterness.

Mamma pretended not to hear. "Do you think," she said, "he'd have made all that noise if he *had* known? He's much too afraid of you."

That struck Arnold as most pitiful and terrible, that Richard should be afraid. Afraid of Papa.

Mamma went on. "But it's always, always Richard. You're not happy unless you're punishing him. I know why you do it."

"You are so clever," said Papa. Up till then he had been rolling his eyes at her. Now he shut them, as much as to say, "I am blinded by your brilliance." Arnold noticed that while he was talking his mouth never showed. What he said came from between his moustache and beard. He was a voice without lips. When he smiled it was not lips you saw, but teeth.

"I don't want to be as clever as you," Mamma said, "if it makes you unjust to your own children."

"Two male marsupials," said Papa, "and one female marsupial. Presumably my own. But I am not unjust. If any marsupial makes itself obnoxious it shall be whipped and sent to bed."

Richard had been whipped then, and sent to bed. Papa had whipped him and he was afraid.

"I am not afraid," said Arnold.

His mother looked at him then as if she saw him for the first time. "You?" she said. "You've no cause to be afraid." It was as if she had said he was too unimportant; it was presumptuous of him to think that he could ever stand in the high places of martyrdom where Richard stood.

"Your mother is right. It is the elder male marsupial that should be exterminated."

And Arnold understood. Somehow he knew that it hurt Mamma when Papa petted him, that it hurt her horribly when he punished Richard; and he knew that he was petted and Richard was punished in order that she should be hurt. He did not know why it was so, any more than he knew why he himself was hurt by his knowledge. But he decided that he would never suffer again the ignominy of being petted and that, whatever happened to him, he would not, no, he would *not* be afraid of Papa.

He slipped down from his seat on *Chambers's Journal* and stood up to deliver his manifesto. "I am going to bed. I want to be with Richard. I want to be punished. I want Papa to punish me. I love Mamma and Richard and Charlotte. And I am not afraid of Papa."

"Hush, Arnold!" said Mamma. She had no smile for him as she kissed him and said good-night.

And he knew again by the strange sense that had come to him that she was displeased with him. She did not want him not to be afraid of Papa. It was Richard she wanted not to be afraid. But, though he knew that it was so, he did not yet know why.

XI

ONE night he was wakened by a light in the room and the sound of two voices. A candle burned on the chest of drawers by Richard's bed ; the light shone on Richard and Mamma.

He still lay as he had fallen asleep with his face turned towards Richard's bed. It was so near his cot that if he put out his arm he could touch it ; and through the low railings that guarded his pillow he could see them without moving. The beautiful boy was stretched out on his back at full length, and Mamma crouched beside him on the bed. She had raised herself on one arm and her body and her face were turned to him ; they leaned to him, brooding over him, almost covering him. Her other arm was about his head, and her hand stroked his hair, his forehead, his face, with a yearning and adoring tenderness. Twice she stooped and kissed him. Arnold could see his brother's golden hair and his curling dark blue eyes that smiled up at her.

He heard her say, " You mustn't mind, darling. You mustn't mind. He doesn't mean what he says. He doesn't know what he's doing."

She was there a long time kissing and caressing him. And when she had raised herself to leave him she still lingered.

Then she rose and came on tip-toe to Arnold's cot. She stooped and tucked him up with slight quick movements. Her face dipped quickly down ; her mouth brushed his in a kiss so light and quick that he barely felt it before it was gone.

He put out his hand and caught her as she turned.

' She whispered, " Go to sleep, Arny," and tried to loosen his fingers one by one. But he had got her ; he had caught her with cunning by the delicate laces of her gown. She bent and kissed him, slackening the perilous strain. His hands let go the webs by which he had secured her, and he put his arms round her neck to draw her down.

"Do like you do to Richard. Stoop over me and stay."

She stooped and her hand passed over his forehead. But it was not—he knew that it was not the caress that he longed for ; it was not the caress that she had given to Richard. As he lay still under it he was made aware, once for all, of the difference between him and Richard. It was as if his mother's hand obeyed some secret and invincible sincerity, letting out the truth with a cruelty she herself would have abhorred.

And she didn't stay.

When she had gone he turned his face away from Richard's bed and cried, not like a child, but slowly, quietly, as mature people cry.

XII

It was Arnold's birthday and Papa was in what Richard called a "floppy" mood. He had given Arnold a model steamer with a real boiler and a real engine, and he had said that if the younger male marsupial behaved himself, some day when summer came, he would take him for a sail.

"He never will," said Richard. "It's only his floppiness. Anyhow he won't do it to please Arnold. He'll do it to annoy me. He only gave him that steamer because *I* wanted it."

He never did take him. For long before the summer came the cutter yacht *Windward* was gone.

Gone ; not like the phaeton and the horses that Charlotte and Richard could remember and were allowed to talk about, but dreadfully and mysteriously, as if somebody had scuttled her in the night and she had sunk to the bottom of the Mersey. Mamma had told Charlotte and Richard, and they had told Arnold as a secret, and all three of them were forbidden to speak about the *Windward* to Papa.

There were other disappearances that year. Pretty Mary, the parlourmaid, went, and Sarah the kitchenmaid and Stephen, the gardener. The dandelions and daisies and ladies' slippers spread higher and higher up the lawn, and in the wild places the peacock's legs were hidden in the long grass ; he couched there as in a jungle, and, when he moved, his blue breast parted the grasses, and his tail laid a broad swath behind him like the wake of a swimming bird.

And one morning the sea-gull was found dead beside his tank.

Then Miss Rodick went. And the same day Richard left off going to Miss Peppercorn's. Holidays began the first week in May.

You would have thought that summer would have been a happy summer, but it wasn't ; because whoever went away or didn't go Papa was always at home. There had been a time

when he was hardly ever there at all. That time, Richard said, was too good to last. Every day except Sunday, as early as nine o'clock, Papa would be out of the house. He crossed by the ferry into Liverpool and sat there in his office all day long. Sometimes, on lucky days, he wouldn't be back till long after you were in bed.

He really had an office. Richard had actually seen him sitting in it the day when they took him into Liverpool to have his teeth out. He remembered because there were enormous pictures of sailing ships on every wall.

You were not allowed to speak about the sailing ships either. Mamma had made them promise never to say the word *Buen' Juana* before Papa, because it would vex him. She was always sorry for Papa now. And it seemed to Arnold that she had become more than ever inaccessible ; that she sat longer with the big brass-bound book in her little hands, and that her smile, when she came back to him, was more than ever mysterious and mournful in its tenderness.

One day a perfect stranger, a tall man with an immense brown beard, got into the house. He tramped up and down the staircase and into all the rooms. He even got into Mamma's room. But when Lizzie, the housemaid, threw open the door of the nursery where Arnold was playing, he looked in sideways as if he were ashamed. And when Arnold looked up he saw the tall man smiling at him, and heard him say, " Does the little boy go with the house ? No ? That's a pity."

Ever afterwards when he thought of the house in the Dell, Arnold could see the tall man standing in the nursery doorway and the smile in his immense brown beard. He was evidently a good, kind man, yet you were forbidden to mention him. There was a mystery about him, like the mystery of the *Windward* and the *Buen' Juana*.

Not long afterwards Arnold was taken away to stay in his uncle's house on the other side of the river. Of this house he could remember nothing but the small narrow side window high up in the wall where he climbed on to the table to look out. He had a vague impression that they called it " Arnold's window," and that it belonged to him because nobody else wanted to look out of it. He knew that if he looked long enough he would see, somewhere out there, his own house in the Dell.

But he never did. He never saw it again ; and presently he left off thinking about it and they said he had forgotten. If

they asked him suddenly, "Arny, do you remember East Ferry?" he could only see the palissades with their secret doors, and the river disappearing under the white walls of the sky, and the grey causeway of the esplanade where he was walking when he looked up and saw God.

And as he had learned that it is not wise to speak of these things he never answered. So his mother said, "*He* won't feel it. He is too young to remember."

XIII

THERE had been a long journey in a railway train and Arnold had fallen asleep before the end of it.

When he woke he found himself in a room he had never seen before, lying between Charlotte and Martha in Martha's big bed. The room was smaller than any he had ever slept in, and it smelt of people and old mattresses and dust. It was so small that Martha's bed almost filled it, and the rest of the furniture out of Martha's room at East Ferry was piled high in the recesses of the chimney. The washstand stood on the top of the low chest of drawers, and the chair on the top of the washstand and the bandbox with Martha's Sunday bonnet in it on the top of the chair. All the china from the washstand was gathered together on the high chest of drawers. The tall white jug looked as if it had flown on wings before the terror of the upheaval and perched there like a mournful bird.

These things had hitherto maintained themselves by their sheer integrity, the permanence of their mutual sedate respect. Now, in this room that he had never seen before, they were behaving with a queerness that confused and dislocated his memories. Even to himself he seemed to be witnessing some change, profound and sinister.

Lying there, he himself so singularly transplanted, between Charlotte and Martha in the big bed, for the first time he became aware of time. It had nothing to do with the clock, nothing whatever. He saw it as if it were thrown out before him in a certain direction. It went slantwise, slap through the furniture piled up in the right-hand recess, slantwise through the wall by the corner. Out there, beyond the walls, he saw it not so much going on as enduring. He saw himself as going slap through things and as enduring; he saw himself somehow as time. He thought, "I am five years old. Some day I shall be ten, like Richard. Some day I shall be eighteen, nineteen, twenty. Some day I shall be thirty."

Arnold Waterlow : A Life

There he stopped ; for he had not learned to count past thirty. Yet past thirty he saw himself and time, not so much going on (once they had got slap through) as enduring. Then the whole thing stopped suddenly.

Martha had waked and was getting up.

A white street on a hill. A row of narrow white houses stuck together like one house, fenced off from the pavement by the tall white spears of the iron railings. All along the row flights of white steps fenced with white spears, steep, like flying buttresses flung out to support the row in its effort of maintaining itself on the hill.

Tall dark houses rising straight up from the pavement, empty houses with black windows, vague and terrible houses. A street with a row of hollow tree-trunks, ghastly shells of trees ripped open by fire, blackened by fire. A road with more dark houses in gardens behind dark walls. Somewhere a common and gorse-bushes ; a great park somewhere with wide green places and enormous trees.

Houses with big girls and big boys in them who were kind to Arnold ; and the garden where he played with the tortoise.

This place fell to pieces rapidly in memory. Whichever scene he started with he could never fit it to the rest or find his way from it to any other. He thought the white street went on down the hill over the hump of the railway bridge at the bottom, past the white railings of the station yard and so into the town ; but he was not sure about it. Only the narrow white houses stood firm on their white hill. He saw their white spears bristling.

And he saw himself and Richard and Mamma walking together down the middle of the white street. Richard was bigger than ever ; he went to the Grammar School and wore a mortar-board that made him look insolent and important. Other boys in mortar-boards were coming towards them up the street. Richard was saying, " Everything's horrid. The place is horrid and the house is horrid, and that's a horrid hat you've got on, Mother."

Mamma wore a large hat of black straw tied down over her ears in a poke ; it was as if her darling face was frightened and had drawn back to hide under the poke.

And Arnold cried out in a passion, " You shan't say it's a horrid hat. It's the most beautiful little hat that ever was. And she's the most beautiful Mamma."

He hated Richard. Somehow he knew that Richard was ashamed to be seen walking with Mamma in the hat she wore. He was afraid of what the big boys in mortar-boards might think of him. And Arnold knew that Mamma knew he was ashamed. He could tell by the twitching of her hand. She had taken his hand as if she turned to him for protection against Richard. As they passed the boys in mortar-boards she clutched it tighter, and it was as if she clung to him for protection against them also. And as he led her safe past them he scowled in defiance of the boys in mortar-boards. As long as he had her he was bigger than the big Grammar School boys. He was bigger than Richard.

Another time he was a little boy again. A little boy in a brown holland pinafore, playing by himself in the yard behind one of the houses guarded with white spears. The other houses in the row had gardens, but Papa's house had only a yard, a narrow strip of clay shut in by bare palings.

You passed almost directly from the street into the yard, up the steep flight of steps between the lines of spears and along the passage of the house. A door at the end of the passage opened on a steeper flight into the yard.

Mamma and Martha stood on the top of the steps and watched him as he played. They were talking about the change.

"Charlotte is only a girl, and Arnold's only a little thing. It won't matter so much to them." Mamma was talking more to herself than Martha. "It's Master Richard that will feel it most."

"He's young, too, ma'am. He'll not feel it like you and Master."

"And you, Martha."

"Me don't matter."

"Do you think you'll be able to manage?"

"Manage? I'll *manage* all right."

"It's not as if it was a large house," said Mamma.

Martha spoke again. "If there was only a garden for Master Arnold——"

"Look at him. He's happy," said Mamma. "He doesn't care."

It was almost as if she were annoyed with Arnold for being happy, for not caring.

He was stooping low over something in the corner at the end of the yard; the skirts of his tunic stood up stiffly in the air. He *was* happy; for he had made himself a garden there.

He had dug up stones out of the clay and enclosed an oblong plot of ground. He had laid down his paths in the form of a broad cross outlined with little pebbles ; with the largest stones he had built a tower in the centre of the cross ; and he had planted his four corner beds with the bunches of bachelor's buttons and syringa and wild currant that he had gathered in the garden of Mrs. Kite, the charwoman.

Mrs. Kite's garden was one of those places that he could never find again. There were no roads to it in memory. It appeared to him for ever solitary in grey space. If it had a gate and an enclosure grey space had swallowed them. Its bushes of syringa and wild currant stood in a shadowy plot. He and Charlotte and Mamma walked along a vague path between borders of bachelor's buttons towards something that he knew to be Mrs. Kite's cottage, though grey space had eaten away all of it but the door. The door opened and Mrs. Kite received them. (Nothing of Mrs. Kite remained but a brown " front," a wrinkled smile and a white apron.)

Going into Mrs. Kite's cottage was like being squeezed into a dark cupboard. Then another door opened inside the cupboard and you came upon all the drawing-room furniture huddled together in a strange room. The stately, arrogant things were frightened. The Indian cabinet had turned its face to the wall ; the Indian sofa was trying to hide itself under a white sheet ; the little green velvet footstool had scuttled away under the sofa ; the burly arm-chairs had drawn together to protect the delicate three-cornered what-nots, white and green and gold ; each nursed a smaller and more fragile chair in its arms.

It was as if they had all struggled and squeezed into Mrs. Kite's cottage in a headlong flight before disaster.

Only the black papier-mâché chair stood in the middle of the floor as it used to stand in the drawing-room at East Ferry. The light from the little window fell on the mother-o'-pearl bird of paradise roosting undismayed in his mother-o'-pearl tree.

Mrs. Kite lifted the white sheets, one by one, in silence and in reverence. From far away under the poke of her hat Mamma's face looked out mournfully at the absurd, beloved objects.

Arnold said, " Why don't we live in this house, Mamma ? "

Since the house contained their drawing-room furniture it seemed to him odd that they didn't live in it, when it was so much nicer than the other house and had a garden.

" Why don't we live—— "

Charlotte looked important. She said, " Hush, you silly ! It

isn't our house." And Mrs. Kite gathered her mouth into puckers and shook her head.

Mamma's blue eyes grew suddenly large under the shade of the poked hat. They were covered with a thin sheet of water. It quivered and slid and hung on to her eyelashes and fell in two tears.

As they went home Charlotte said, " We're not to talk about Mrs Kite's cottage, are we, Mamma ? "

There was some mystery about Mrs. Kite's cottage, too.

They talked about it under their breath to each other.

" It's a shame," said Richard, " that we can't live there with Mother and Martha and leave Papa here."

Behind the tall white spears the children were battened down into the basement to protect them from the storm that howled above and was Papa.

" Who'd look after him ? " said Charlotte.

" He'd look after himself."

But it seemed that that was just what he couldn't do.

When Martha was not cleaning and cooking and sweeping she was looking after Papa. When Mamma was not helping Martha she was looking after Papa.

In that narrow house he was more terrible than ever. The floors shook with the violence of his movements. Charlotte and Richard cowered and dashed under hatches when they heard him coming ; even Arnold took to the basement stairs in slow and decorous retreat. But Mamma no longer seemed to be afraid of him.

If she had been afraid she could never have climbed into the big bed and lain there beside him all night. She could never have endured either the darkness of the room or the appalling light that came through the red damask curtains of the window and the bed.

Arnold himself would have been afraid to sleep there if he had not dragged down the big brass-bound Bible from its place on the chest of drawers and taken it to bed with him every night. He understood that this book was sacred, a visible, tangible link between Mamma and God, and therefore a visible, tangible link between God and him. He required such a link, for he couldn't honestly say that he had *seen* God since the day when He had appeared to him at East Ferry. The weight of the book pressing down the bed-clothes reassured him till he fell asleep. And if he woke in the night he knew that behind the terrible red

curtains there was Mamma. If he raised himself by the railing of his cot and put aside the curtains he could touch her. She was holy and beautiful. He had an exquisite sense of peace and of protection when he thought of her lying there.

He knew that Papa lay somewhere on the other side of her. Once or twice he had made out a huge white bulk under the bed-clothes that was probably Papa. Luckily, the bed was so big that he seemed very far away.

But one night he found himself alone with Papa. The room was all light, for a candle still burned at the far side of the bed. He had raised himself in his cot and had pulled aside the curtain to look at Mamma. And she wasn't there.

There, all alone in the middle of the big bed, was Papa.

Arnold couldn't pretend to himself that he was not frightened. Yet he had to lean over the railing of the cot and look. The fascination of the thing he looked at was stronger than his fear.

Papa lay on his back with his legs stretched out straight. One arm was flung across his chest, and its hand held the edge of the sheet that covered him to the waist ; the other arm lay at his side ; the weight of its hand dragged the sheet tight, defining the great slope of his body. Under his thin night shirt his chest and his waist rose and fell gently as he breathed. His forehead, his eyelids and his eyebrows were smooth and still. All his face above the black beard was still. His very beard, tilted slightly upward, was at rest.

Papa had given himself up to sleep with a confiding tenderness. The innocence of sleep was on his sad eyelids and his broad white nose with the wide-flying nostrils. That stillness and innocence of Papa was terrible to Arnold. Yet he climbed over his railing and knelt on the big bed to look at him. Warmth came from the heaving body like the warmth from a huge animal, and he wondered what would happen if he were to stroke Papa. He was afraid that his eyes would open and roll like little balls, and that his eyebrows would rush up into his hair.

The hard railing of his cot cramped him, and he moved nearer, crouching beside Mama's pillow. Papa stirred in his sleep ; his eyes opened. He lifted his great arm ; it rose, it circled and sank again on Mamma's pillow. The hand moved there as if it searched for something. When it touched Arnold Papa gave a little moaning, yearning cry. His cry was even more terrible than his stillness.

Arnold quivered as if his whole being was penetrated and

shaken by the cry. He was sorry for Papa lying all alone in the big bed. He knew what it was to want Mamma and to look for her and not find her. This pity that he felt was terrible like grief. And it was invincible. He wanted to climb back into his safe cot ; but it would not allow him to leave Papa lying there all alone. It made him creep closer and closer to the heaving body while he prayed to God to make Mamma come soon.

And then suddenly Papa awoke. " Marsupial," he said, " what are you doing in my bed ? "

" I'm staying wiv you till Mamma comes."

Papa's arm swept down from the pillow and gathered Arnold to him. He was squeezed between Papa's arm and the great slope of his side. Whenever the arm slackened it tightened again and pressed him closer. He lay there trembling with a sense of exquisite peril. Besides the heaving on the top of the slope there was something inside Papa that kept on thumping like a hammer. He tried to count the thumps and fell asleep.

When he woke Mamma was leaning over both of them.

Papa said, " I thought you were never coming."

And Mamma said, " I couldn't. I had all the socks and stockings to darn."

Because he slept in his mother's room several things were revealed to Arnold that were hidden from Charlotte and Richard. Thus he was now aware that, terrifying as Papa might be by day, they had no reason to be afraid of him at night. There was some insoluble contradiction between Papa's behaviour in public and in daylight, and that secret nocturnal life of his. Arnold could never tell by what leap he had arrived at the conclusion (denied by Richard) that the person whom he had found that night all alone in the big bed was the real, the hidden, innermost Papa. " It's all very well for you," said Richard. " You wait till he gives you a trouncing."

He had not long to wait.

All morning and all afternoon Richard was away at the Grammar School ; and as the fury of Papa could no longer light upon Richard it lit upon Arnold instead.

He had broken into the basement room where Arnold, a tamer of wild horses, was driving Charlotte round and round the table, and it was Charlotte and not Arnold who had screamed.

The trouncing was not his first experience of physical pain. In that house pain lay in wait for you at every turn. The

stairs were so steep that if you fell on them ten to one you rolled to the bottom ; the rooms were so small that they were dangerous to anything that moved with swiftness, and though by taking thought you could steer in safety round and between the cruel pieces of furniture, a joyous gambol or any sudden swerve would hurl you upon some sharp edge or projecting decoration.

There was honour in those wounds and bruises ; they were fortunes of the war legitimately waged by all active bodies against stationary obstruction, and it was mostly your arms and head that suffered. When the chiffonier let out with its corner and caught him a stunning blow on the forehead Arnold got even with the chiffonier by saying, " I liked it."

But the trouncing was another matter altogether. It inflicted outrage and humiliation as well as pain. Every time that his father's hand came down on him he suffocated, holding back his sobs.

It was when his mother came to him and buttoned up his knickerbockers that he cried. And then Mamma gathered him into her lap and held him there and her hands pressed softly on the place where the pain was ; and her mouth, as it moved over his face, gave out a tender sound that soothed him, and he looked up at her and jerked out between his sobs, " I don't mind . . . Weally and twoolly . . . I don't mind, Mamma."

It was worth a trouncing to sit on his mother's knee as on a throne while Charlotte knelt beside him and made much of him. The steamboat alone was almost worth it.

For when Richard came home and heard what had happened he gave him back his model steamboat. Long ago Arnold had been forced to give it to Richard because, Mamma said, he was too young to take care of it. Except that its piston was broken the steamboat was as good as new.

To be sure Richard pointed out to him that his suffering was merely vicarious. " He can't trounce *me* any more," said Richard, " so he trounces Arnold."

Even so Arnold could see, not only that he had acquired importance by his trouncing, but that a trouncing was the one way to perfect possession of Mamma. It had made him equal or nearly equal to Richard. The difference seemed to be that, whereas Richard could be sure of her in any circumstances, he had to be hurt physically, and rather badly hurt, before he could be sure.

XIV

UNITS—tens—hundreds . . .

Mamma was teaching him arithmetic. She had taught him his first spelling as she stood at the table in the basement room and washed up the breakfast things and Charlotte dried them. It had gone very well ; for Mamma had left off saying, " Quick—quick ! " and whenever he really forgot a word Charlotte prompted him behind the dish-cloth. (Charlotte, drying plates and saucers, was more than ever grown-up and superior and competent.) And with a little help now and then from his brother and sister he had learned to read. Now he could read faster than Charlotte could follow him.

And he had learned to write, advancing, under the casual glances of Mamma, from strokes to pot-hooks, and from pot-hooks to whole sentences, while Charlotte, standing stiffly beside her mother with her hands clasped behind her under her long fair pigtails, mouthed out the Athanasian Creed.

" . . . The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible : the Holy Ghost incomprehensible.

" ' The Father eternal, the Son eternal : and the Holy Ghost eternal.

" ' And yet there are not three eternal : but one eternal.

" ' As also there are not three incomprehensibles nor three uncreated : but one uncreated and one incomprehensible.' "

Charlotte's pale snub face, her pushed-out lips, her rigid attitude proclaimed her pride in her own competence. She knew she was the only child in Brentwood who was learning the Athanasian Creed. She knew it was the most difficult of the three creeds and she gloried in its difficulty ; she tilted her chin and moved her head up and down every time her tongue clipped out the " in-comp-rehen-sible " with arrogant precision.

Arnold stopped his copying to listen, and something in his innermost being thrilled to the majestic, unintelligible words.

Arnold Waterlow : A Life

And now Mamma was teaching him arithmetic, the Multiplication Table. It was the old trouble of the letters all over again. The adventure that had begun in wonder and excitement was ending in misery and stupor. Only the fascination of the letters was nothing to the fascination of the numbers. He lay awake at night watching their endless, intricate procession.

Units . . . tens . . . hundreds . . . thousands . . .

He saw it as a pattern of ten colours unrolling itself for ever and ever, repeating itself for ever and ever, doubling, multiplying itself, winding in and out of itself and growing richer and richer for ever and ever ; only the bands of the tens kept firm the structure of the pattern. (The pulpy, shapeless six no longer slipped through his fingers. He could take hold of it now, wedged firmly between five and seven.)

Or he piled the units one on the top of the other like the bricks of a tower, higher and higher, up through the roof of his head till they toppled and fell and he had to begin all over again.

These things only happened when he was alone with them. Mamma was teaching him the Multiplication Table out of a book. And he had stuck fast at the very beginning.

"What does it mean," he said, "once one is one?"

"It means that you start with one. You multiply it once," said Mamma.

"But if you want to start with it you must leave it alone. You mustn't multiply it."

"You *must*. This," said Mamma, "is the Multiplication Table. Now then—quick!—once one——"

Arnold put his hands to his ears and cried out in his excitement, "No—no—if you multiply it even once it'll go, and you'll never get it again. It'll make itself two."

"No, Arnold. That's what you learnt last week—one and one are two. That's addition. You're learning multiplication now. Multiplication is one thing and addition is another."

"No," said Arnold, "there's no difference, *really*. It says three times two is six and three times three is nine. If you *add* two and two three times, that's six, and if you add three and three three times that's nine."

"Now Arnold, you're trying to argue, just to get out of saying your Multiplication Tables, and it won't do. Say after me, 'Once time one is one.'"

"We can pretend it is, Mamma, if you like."

And by saying it after her, by trying not to think of One, by putting One behind him and refusing to look at it he struggled

through the Multiplication Table as far as twelve times. He stuck in bad places like eight times seven and nine times six (he never could remember which of them was fifty-six and which was fifty-four, for in this bewildering, everlasting pattern also only the tens stood firm) ; but he found that you could get out by adding the number to itself the required number of times, while Mamma tapped her little foot and asked him what he was thinking about *now* ? Not for worlds would he have told her that he was adding.

He would lie awake doing it till he passed the bounds of twelve and saw the procession of the times going on, it also, for ever and ever ; and the tower piled higher and higher, packed with numbers till it, too, toppled and crashed down.

Yet, if one thing seemed more certain than another, it was that, though there was no round, comfortable number in which this business ended, it began very definitely with One. Then even this assurance was taken from him.

Richard had come home to dinner boasting that he was " in Fractions " (which Papa said, was what he ought to be in for slamming the front door behind him like a young blackguard) ; and when Arnold heard Mamma boasting to Charlotte and Charlotte boasting to Martha that Richard was in Fractions he enquired whether he couldn't go into Fractions too ? And Mamma said No, certainly not ; he was much too young.

Her pretty face had become suddenly very red and she looked frightened.

" What *are* Fractions ? " He concluded from his mother's manner that they must be some kind of trousers. And as Mamma stooped low over his plate to cut his mutton up for him she whispered, " Something that a little boy can't understand."

" A little boy ? " said Papa in the voice he had when his eyes rolled and his eyebrows flew up towards his hair. " Ask your mother what one and a half plus three and two-thirds, multiplied by nine and three-quarters and divided by five is."

Mamma made a piteous little face at him as if she implored him not to do it before the children.

" Or," said Papa, with an increasing grimness, " ask your brother."

Though Arnold couldn't understand a word of what his father said he could see that he was laying a cruel trap for Mamma and Richard, and that they were both frightened. (Poor innocents, they fell into Papa's traps every time !) So he replied politely, " No thank you, Richard ; I am not interested

any more," and waited till he and his brother were alone together in the basement room.

Richard was in a benign mood and he told him all about it. "You take the unit—that's one, see?—and divide it——"

"Oh no," said Arnold. He had a foreshadowing of what was going to happen. "You *can't*!"

"Can't you just!" With a piece of paper and with scissors Richard showed him how it could be done.

The next time Mamma asked him what once one was, he answered with an awful gravity, "There isn't any one."

There wasn't and there never had been. The thing in which the whole process seemed to have begun, the thing he was always trying to hold on to, had crumbled away. It had split up into fragments that split up for ever and ever. He started with his one; and in an instant it turned into a lot of ones. On his right hand there was the growing, toppling pile of the numbers, the ones, and the tens and the hundreds and the thousands, and on his left there was the growing volume of the fractions. *That* never toppled, never crashed; it swelled; it got more and more enormous till he felt that the walls on his left hand must burst.

One night it struck him that since there was at least a right and a left in it, he might try starting with Himself. He tried it; and the horrible idea occurred to him that at this rate there couldn't be any Himself either. He was only *one of the ones*. It was all very well so long as he stuck to his right hand where he piled himself up; but there was the left where he had to split himself . . .

Luckily when the splitting began he always fell asleep.

But these things only happened at night when he lay awake in his cot. In the daytime, when he did sums with a pencil on a slate under Mamma's direction, all the horror of the numbers went. So did all the interest and the excitement.

Somewhere inside the cover of his copy-book six strokes in a row stood for the years he had lived.

XV

HE had to sit a long time now over his copy-book and his slate because they kept him quiet while Mamma taught Charlotte history and geography and French.

There was something odd and mysterious about French. All other lessons had to go at the break-neck pace set by Mamma or you were told that you didn't really know them. When you stopped to think, Mamma drove you on with her little cry of "Quick—quick!" But French went slowly as if Mamma's object were to make a little bit of it last a long time. If you watched Mamma when she was giving a French lesson you saw that she was frightened (there were so many things that frightened Mamma). Little puckers came out all over her forehead; her lips parted in a murmur, and her head quivered slightly as she moved it from line to line, while she worried the opposite page incessantly with her finger and thumb. Her whole face had a scared look as if she were afraid that something dreadful would jump up at her out of the book. When Charlotte rushed ahead in her voluble efficiency Mamma seemed positively afraid of Charlotte. There was always a mark for the page for each day, and Mamma's hand always covered up the lines below it, and as soon as they came to it she shut up the book with a snap before Charlotte could see what was coming.

Whenever she did this she smiled a little smile that would have been roguish if she had not been frightened, as much as to say, "I was too quick for you!"

Charlotte used to tease her by trying to read beyond the mark, and Arnold looked on, fascinated. He was convinced that something dreadful would happen if she succeeded. But she never did. Mamma was always too quick for her. It might have passed as a game if Mamma hadn't been so serious and so frightened.

Arnold's Bible lesson came after Charlotte's French. Over

the Bible lessons Mamma recovered. It was as if the little quivering thing returned from some dangerous adventure to a place where she knew that she was safe. Sitting at the head of the table she passed in an instant from agitation to stillness and serenity. She sat up very straight with a small air of assurance and authority.

"Say after me, Arny, 'I believe in God the Father, and in God the Son and in God the Holy Ghost'"—and it was as if she said, "The dreadful things are over, and it's all clear now and simple."

And he said it after her. It was the only way if you wanted to keep out of trouble.

And now another thing had come to bother him when he lay awake at night. The Three and One.

He *had* to get it right.

There were three of them up there. There was God; that was one. There was Jesus, His Son; that was two. And the Holy Ghost and the white dove coming down out of heaven. If you counted the dove that was more than three. It was four. He was not quite sure whether you might count the dove.

Still, that must have been what they meant by the Three and One. Three and one made four. If you counted the dove you got it right.

Before long he could say the whole of the Church Catechism through without a halt. Every time he said it he felt that he was appeasing some mysterious and holy requirement of Mamma. All the same, he had his own opinion of the Catechism which he confided to Richard and Charlotte. Long ago Richard had stuck fast in the middle of his Duty towards his Neighbour and had refused to go any farther. It was all very well for Charlotte; she was only a girl; but Richard thought that Arnold should make a firm stand. "If you don't," he said, "you'll have to learn every blessed thing the Mater chooses."

But to Arnold there was cowardice in flinging up the game. "You can say fwooo anyfing," he said, "if you pwetend enough."

"I don't see," said Richard, "what on earth you *can* pretend."

Arnold considered it. "Perwaps you don't, *wreally*. You jusk fink of somefing else."

"But," Richard argued, "if you're thinking of something else how can you remember?"

Arnold turned on him his large, disconcerting eyes. "I—*don't*—wemember."

"Why do you listen to him?" said Charlotte, and she tossed her long pigtails. "He doesn't know what he's talking about."

He didn't know altogether. Only it seemed to him that when he said the Catechism through he was not remembering. It was the secret things that you remembered. He was no longer ashamed and hurt when Mamma called him a little parrot. It was as if he had discovered that by being a little parrot you could make up the energy you expended in being a little boy.

He was only hurt and ashamed when she put her little fingers on his secret things. By this time he had become so wary that her fingers never closed. When Mamma said, "Army, do you remember how you used to see God up in the sky?" he answered as if he were ashamed.

"No. It wasn't me."

"Army!"

"Well—if I did it was ever so long ago."

But, though he hid it away out of her sight, as if it had been a sin, his secret certainty continued. There was not the least confusion in his mind. The God he had seen endured for him in an exquisite isolation and did no violence to the God he was always learning about. It might never have occurred to him to compare them but for a supreme curiosity that now assailed him.

He had given up asking questions; they were never answered unless you knew the answers already. He knew all about God the Father, and about God the Son; Mamma had told him over and over again. But what he wanted was to know about the Holy Ghost, and nobody would ever tell him anything. Mamma looked frightened when you asked her, and he had concluded that there was some mystery about the Holy Ghost, that he was one of those things you mustn't talk about. You were not told to love him as you were told to love the Father and the Son. Nobody, not even Martha, seemed to care about him.

Yet, quite clearly, the Holy Ghost was one of the Three and One. But Arnold pictured him as living alone up there, flying about by himself in the waste places of heaven. The Others took very little notice of him; they didn't seem to care about him, either.

Arnold was so sorry for him that, one morning when the Bible lesson was finished, he said suddenly, "If nobody wants the Holy Ghost I'll have him."

And he was sent to bed a whole hour before his proper time.

As he lay there he thought of God the Father sitting on his

great throne, and of Jesus sitting on His right hand, and of the Holy Ghost flying about by himself in the waste places of heaven with nobody to care for him.

He was sorry for the Holy Ghost. But his sorrow had a sort of awe in it and he was proud of being punished for his sake.

The drawn damask curtains made a false red light in the room. Each window was a red square that glowed.

Something outside the window began to stir. The curtains shook as it tore at the sashes, and waves of dark and light red quivered in the squares.

Arnold climbed out of his cot and went to the window. He drew back the curtain. Behind the curtain the daylight was still white. A cloud of white dust was running in the street below. The little acacia trees were swaying in the wind ; they tossed and strained as if they would have torn themselves from the earth. High up, above it all, the white clouds had risen like a flock of enormous birds and flew over the sky.

The Holy Ghost was out there, flying high with the white clouds and the wind.

XVI

ILFORD. . . . He could not have told you how they got there ; he seemed to have no recollection of getting there at all, except that it happened on his birthday. It must have been a terrific affair, involving two pantehnicon vans and a journey on the Great Eastern Railway past Harold's Wood, Chadwell Heath and Romford. To Arnold all memory of these stages was submerged. One minute he was playing in the clay yard behind the house at Brentwood ; the next he was standing in the garden behind the house at Ilford. It was then that he saw the purple lilies.

They stood high and still in the strong sunlight, not as if they themselves were shone upon, but as if through their deep violet and blue they beat out a secret light. As he looked at them and put out his hand to touch them he trembled with the shock of this unsurpassable encounter. He had never seen purple lilies before (there were none in the garden at East Ferry), but he had rushed to them across the strange garden as if he had known them, as if they knew him and were waiting there for him. He grasped one of their tall leaves ; it was firm like a sword-blade ; it had the sharp point and the sharp edges of a sword. There was a dulled silver coating on its greyish green surface ; it might have been made of metal. The flowers rose up out of the stacked sword-blades on a stem straight and rigid as a lance ; each bud was a lance-head that swelled and burst into that divine violet loveliness.

He gathered one of the blades and ran his finger along it, to feel the sharpness of its point and edges. Even on a birthday you couldn't have desired a better sword. He stuck it in his belt. There was just the right sort of thickness at the end where the hilt should have been. He gathered one of the tall stems (who would have dreamed that a stalk could be so admirably rigid ?). Carried over his right shoulder it served him as a lance. (The border was a whole armoury of swords and lances.) The

flower was all right, for the lance was not an ordinary lance ; it was enchanted.

Then, with the sword in his belt and the flowering lance over his shoulder, he began to march round and round the garden. It seemed to him that never had he known such perfect happiness. He was a soldier, and he marched. Not an ordinary soldier ; but a soldier of Christ ; that was why he was enchanted and carried a lance in flower. And as he marched he sang :

“ The beautiful, beautiful garden,
The beautiful, beautiful garden,
The beautiful, beautiful garden
Where the swords and lances grow ! ”

It seemed to him that the garden was both beautiful and large. It had a lawn that stretched for a considerable distance down the middle and rose in a bank topped by a privet hedge. And behind the bank there was still a square plot planted with cabbages and strawberries. The steep, bare back of the house, a long brick wall on the two sides and a short wall at the far end shut the garden in. A narrow gravel wall went round it beside the borders under the walls.

To Arnold these walks had the glamour of unknown roads ; each stage of his march was exciting. He started by the purple lilies, under the long hot wall ; when he passed the privet hedge the flowers ceased in the borders and the currant and gooseberry bushes began ; when he turned the corner he came on a raspberry grove and a jungle of gigantic rhubarb under the wall at the end ; and all down by the other long wall his legs brushed aside the leaves of great ferns curving out from their border.

There was a large space of gravel under the house like a small court, and as he crossed it he was aware of Charlotte and Richard standing on the threshold of the back door and watching him.

“ Tame,” said Richard each time as he passed them. “ Tame.” Charlotte was smiling.

Arnold’s song and the stamp of his marching feet were so loud that the first two times he didn’t hear what Richard said.

The third time Mamma and Martha were standing in the doorway behind Richard and they were smiling too. But as yet there was nothing sinister in their smiles, nothing that could break the charm of the perfect, unspeakable happiness. Arnold smiled back at them as he came singing :

“ The beautiful, beautiful garden
Where the swords—— ”

Charlotte was laughing. Only a little laugh, but he heard it. He stood still and looked at them. Martha was laughing now ; and Mamma—he was not quite sure about Mamma. It was Charlotte's laughter and the look on Richard's face that held him.

Even then he didn't take it in all at once ; for it was his birthday, and on a birthday you could do anything you liked within reason, and nobody said a word. You were, for that day, sacred.

"Tame," said Richard. (He knew he was outraging the holy law of the birthday. But he couldn't help it. He was afraid lest the people in the next house should look out of their windows and see his brother. His singing they most certainly must have heard. The honour of the family was at stake.)

"Tame," he said. "Domestic."

Arnold took the words like a lash laid on bared, shameful flesh.

He flew at Richard.

He had flung down his flowering lance ; his sword dropped from his belt in the fury of his onset. His instinct told him that he must fight Richard with his balled and naked fists. They battered themselves against Richard's arms as against wooden bars. He writhed in frenzy and leaped, trying to dodge Richard's guard, to hit his forehead, his face, his chest. Only Richard's stomach was within his reach. He knew he mustn't hit it ; neither must he bite Richard, nor scratch, nor kick him. He must just hit straight out.

He went on hitting straight out though it hurt his knuckles dreadfully. If only Richard would have hit out too !

But Richard simply stood there, laughing, and defending himself gently with his arms. Mamma's little cry of, "Oh, Arny !" sounded very far away.

Richard began dancing backwards, laughing as he went.

"Come on," he shouted. "Hit a bit harder while you're about it !"

Arnold came on. He was hitting harder and straighter.

"Steady," said Richard. "Steady." His voice was quiet and serious now. "Don't try and hit so high. Get in under my guard."

Arnold got in. His fury had worn off. The thing had an interest and excitement of its own.

"I wish you would hit me, Richard. Never mind my birthday."

"All in good time," said Richard. "Try again. That's it. Good! Oh, I say, good!"

It was all over. With Richard's arm round his shoulder Arnold staggered to the back door.

He paused there. "I say, who licked?"

"Nobody, exactly," said Richard. "But you didn't do half badly for a youngster."

Mamma was trying hard to look shocked; but the law of the birthday held. There could be no punishment. So all she said was, "Oh, Arny, this is a sad beginning."

But it wasn't the beginning. The beginning had been perfect happiness.

This too was happiness, only of another sort. As he passed with Richard through the door of the strange house he knew that he had left infancy behind him.

He was seven years old.

He had an impression that the house was enormous and solitary. But it was only semi-detached, one of two pairs, the last of the suburb, that stood looking both ways over open country.

Approached from a long way off and from the back, they rose up, steep and in nakedness, out of the cornfields. So flat was the country on this side that the two blocks looked high and sinister as if they had been lifted up out of some city of disaster and set down incongruously in the corn.

There are houses whose walls drink in human emotion and give it off like an atmosphere. For Arnold those tall grey houses in the fields had a terror and a poignant beauty that could not possibly have been their own. Long afterwards, whenever he remembered his father's house, he saw it like that; so much of his secret life had it absorbed in the thirty years they lived in it. He dreamed of it, and his dreams mixed with his memories till something like a sheet of luminous air was drawn over the suburban front of it; a front of yellowish brick with indented facings of white stucco.

From the windows on that side you could see, between two elm-trees at the bottom of the garden, the green fields of Wanstead Flats. The River Roding ran somewhere down there unseen. A wooden fence hid the white high road.

Mr. Waterlow's house, the first of the four, was distinguished from the other three. They had no elm-trees and only one gate that opened straight on to the high road; whereas Mr. Waterlow's

house was approached sideways, in a fine seclusion, through the big gates of an avenue of limes. His gardens opened into the promenade, each by a postern door in the walls ; and where his walls ended a long strip of plantation followed the lines of the lime-trees to the edge of the fields where they broke off so abruptly that the avenue seemed to lead straight into the corn. Other people had houses in the avenue on the south side. The south side was suburb ; the north was country ; and the double row of lime-trees stood between.

Nothing could have been more cloistral than Mr. Waterlow's house and garden as seen from the avenue. But when you had once got through his postern door you might just as well have walked straight into Mr. Godden's front garden. Above and through the low white-painted iron railings Mr. Godden's straight strips of lawn and gravel walk, his vivid circles of bedding-out plants could be seen, and the entire figures of Mr. Godden and Mrs. Godden and the three young Goddens could be seen also.

This made the front garden interesting to Arnold ; but it distressed Mamma. She could bear to live at Ilford, seven miles from Whitechapel, for Papa's sake, since (at last) he had got something to do in the City ; but she could not bear even to think of the sort of people who might be living there too. Rather than let her children mix with theirs she would send all three of them to school.

Arnold was disappointed when Mamma told him that neither he nor Richard nor Charlotte were to have anything to do with the Goddens. They were not to speak to them. No ; they were not even to look at them ; which was difficult when they were so visibly there. He wanted to look at them. He wanted to speak to them. Mrs. Godden was so large and rosy and comfortable ; she smiled so kindly at him over the railings, and he always smiled back at her (Mamma had said nothing about smiling ; apparently she had not contemplated it as possible). And when your balls flew over into their garden, as they did about a dozen times a day, the three young Goddens, Albert, Wilfrid and Winifred, threw them back again practically at once. All they said was, " You might be careful with your hard balls, because of our spectacles."

All three young Goddens wore spectacles, which alone made them interesting. It seemed to Arnold that they must be remarkable, or they would hardly have been trusted to wear them.

But Mr. Godden was his worst embarrassment. *He* was so

remarkable that it was almost impossible not to look at him. And he had a way of looking at Arnold as if he fascinated him. He wore spectacles, too, like his children; enormous spectacles whose blond gold rims matched his moustache and beard so that they appeared as a natural part of his face. You couldn't hope to escape his observation, for his head, with its peering and adjusting gestures, seemed specially designed for observing. (Arnold supposed that his spectacles had to be enormous because it was so big.)

As if to lighten the sheer weight of all this seeing apparatus his beard was trimmed away to the finest possible point.

When the great glasses were turned on him Arnold felt that at any moment he might speak to him.

"What am I to do if he does?" he asked.

"If he does," said Mrs. Waterlow, "you must be polite. But he won't."

She couldn't believe that it could really happen.

Yet it did.

One Saturday afternoon Mr. Godden was in his garden when Arnold was trying to scale the front of the house by aid of the alternate projections and indentations of the stucco. He had come to the third indentation when the slab that supported him gave way. He dropped between the parapet of the front doorsteps and the basement area, falling comfortably enough on to a clump of rock plant.

As he dropped he heard a moan that came from the other side of the iron railing where Mr. Godden watched him. His large magnified eyes yearned at him behind their glasses.

"I say," said Arnold, "do bits come off *your* house like that?"

In his excitement he forgot that he was forbidden to talk to Mr. Godden (or look at him).

"I don't know," said Mr. Godden, "that I give them a chance to come off—like that."

"Supposing," said Arnold, "I'd climbed to the very top and the *last* bit had broken?"

"Supposing indeed," said Mr. Godden; and he sighed, "I shall have to put up a high fence, all the way along, so that I can't see you any more."

"Don't you like seeing me, Mr. Godden?"

"I like seeing you, as you are now, right end up. Very much. But not when you're trying to break your neck. It—it frightens me."

"Can't you"—he hesitated—"take off your spectacles?"

"I could. But if I did I shouldn't see my bedding-out plants."

"Arny——" Mamma was calling softly to him from within the drawing-room.

"I'm afraid I must go in now. Perhaps, Mr. Godden, you'd better put up that fence."

"It's all right, Mamma," he said afterwards. "He's going to put up a fence all the way along, so that he can't see me. And then" (he said it sorrowfully) "I shan't be *able* to talk to him any more."

Mr. Godden never put up his fence. But it was years before Arnold talked to him again.

As if they belonged to the garden, seven lime-trees of the avenue guarded its outer wall. They were so near that, as you walked along the top of the wall, you passed under seven green fans, one after the other. When you looked up you saw that the fans were transparent, and that a beautiful green light came through.

One hot day all down the avenue there came a singularly sweet smell, and as he walked along the top of the wall Arnold saw that little honey-coloured flowers with greenish wings were hanging under the green fans. Their smell was like the taste of honey without the honey-comb.

One of the reasons why he liked Ilford was that it smelt so good. He remembered those first months there as hot and sweet and full of bright light. The nights went like black flashes, and there were no punishments, so that it seemed to be always daytime. He had an impression of things standing still round him and lasting a long time. Even the smell of the lime-tree flowers and of the privet and lavender lasted, and the running pattern the fruit-trees made on the inner wall, the stems standing upright and the branches stretching out straight and still, the whole design stuck close to the wall as if it had been moulded on it. Under the tufted leaves the small green balls of fruit lasted as if they would never grow into peaches and nectarines.

Yet one morning Arnold was waked by Richard and Charlotte standing at his bedside and telling him to get up and come to the window. (He slept with Richard in a room on the top floor at the back, looking towards the east.) The three stood there in their nightgowns leaning out over the window-sill.

It was not yet seven o'clock. Eastwards over the flat corn-

fields the light had the clearness of crystal. In the middle of the field three elm-trees stood side by side up to their skirts in the corn.

"Look down there, silly," said Charlotte.

Arnold looked. Down there, in the garden, Papa was standing by the fruit-trees, plucking peaches off the wall and eating them. He went from tree to tree, pausing a long time before each. From the window they could see his earnest and voluptuous gestures as he fingered the fruit and plucked it and ate it where he stood. In each act he expressed a childlike absorptior and satisfaction. It was evident that he believed himself unobserved.

Arnold and Richard felt a sudden tenderness towards their father as they watched him engaged in this adventure. It made him seem more lovable.

"Who'd have thought," said Richard dreamily, "that he'd have done it?"

"He's at the nectarines now," said Charlotte.

Her voice expressed disgust rather than sympathy. Only Richard and Arnold appreciated this strange new innocence of Mr. Waterlow.

The fascination of it lasted quite a long time; until it occurred to Richard that the thing was serious.

"I don't believe he's left one. Not one of the ripe ones."

Then he had an idea. "Tell you what, supposing we get up early to-morrow and do it too. Before he does. It's our only chance."

"Oh—let's!"

Arnold quivered with excitement, but Charlotte was prudent. "Supposing," she said, "they see us?"

"We must get up so early that they can't see us."

"Let's get up at night," said Arnold, "and do it in the dark."

"I don't know," said Richard. "There isn't as much in it as you'd think." (It was clear that he respected the suggestion.) He added thoughtfully, "I've tried it. It isn't the same thing at all. You want the light on them. But we mustn't be later than six o'clock."

They were not much later.

"Supposing," said Charlotte with her mouth full of nectarine (a horrid idea had occurred to her), "supposing he counts them?"

"You must take some risk," said Richard. "There wouldn't be much fun in it if you didn't."

"There'd be the nectarines," said Charlotte.

But Arnold rose to Richard's height. "Don't you almost wish he'd come out and find us? P'r'aps all the time he's hiding behind the privet hedge and he'll rush out.—What would you do, Richard?"

Richard took a reconnaissance of the position. "He'd have to come round one end or the other. Whichever end he takes I shall cut and run slick round the other."

"I shan't. I shall climb over the wall into Mr. Godden's garden."

"And leave *me*," said Charlotte.

"Well—no, I shan't. I shall stay with Charlotte."

"Lucky for you, then, he isn't there."

But though their luck held, they got up a little earlier the next day.

"I will say this for him," said Richard, "he doesn't count them."

It was not till the third morning that Richard found out what Arnold had been doing.

"I say, you young beggar, you'll have collywobblers. You mustn't eat the little ones."

"But," said Arnold, "it's the little ones I *have* been eating."

"*Have* you?" said Charlotte. "What you going to do with that big one you've hidden under the rhubarb leaf?"

"I am going to take it to Mamma."

"*What's* that?" said Richard.

"I am; really, Richard."

"You can't do that, you know. It's as good as confessing."

"I don't care," said Arnold. "Little Mamma *must* have some."

"She won't eat them," said Charlotte. "She'll only give them to Papa."

"But," said Arnold, "I've saved *all* my biggest ones for Mamma. I've given her two every morning."

"Oh, you——" Charlotte had no word for his treachery.

"You poor little duffer," said Richard. "Those are the ones Papa had after dinner."

Swiftly and steadily the sun rose in the clear sky. They could hear the milkman's cart clattering in the avenue. Any minute the blinds might be pulled up and Papa might look out from the bedroom window.

They ate swiftly and steadily. Arnold had started on the big ones now, having learned the lamentable futility of sacrifice.

It was Richard who spoke first. "I say, just look what we've done! Look at the trees. There isn't one blessed peach left on one of them; or one blessed nectarine."

"Have we eaten them all?" said Arnold.

"Every blessed fruit. Except the one with the wasp in it."

"We shall have to confess *now*," said Charlotte.

Richard was pensive. "After all," he said, "why not? It *was* rather beastly of us. Who shall we confess to?"

"God," said Charlotte. (It seemed the only safe plan.)

"That's no good. He knows. How about Mamma? That might do." (In his heart Richard knew it wouldn't.)

"*She* knows," said Arnold. He looked at Richard. "We shall have to confess to Papa."

"I'll have to," said Richard. For a moment he saw himself exalted in the grandeur of "*noblesse oblige*."

As it happened, he and Arnold confessed together, standing at the foot of the stairs as Papa came down to breakfast. (Experience had taught them that it was not wise to approach him in the presence of Mamma.) Their voices tumbled over each other.

"We're sorry, but we've eaten all the peaches——"

"——All the nectarines."

"We got up early to do it——"

"To do it."

Then Richard's voice rose and asserted itself. "Shut up, Arnold. It wasn't Arnold's fault, Papa. I thought of it first."

"I had rather fancied," said Papa, "that it was *my* idea."

"Besides, he only ate the little ones——"

"But," said Arnold, "I *did* eat them——"

"He saved all his big ones for Mamma."

("Which," said Richard to himself, "is more than you did.")

"My son," said Papa, "you might just as well have saved them for the angel Gabriel."

They stood aside and watched him with awe as he descended into the basement

"By gum," said Richard, "he isn't even waxy."

"You wait," said Charlotte. "Something's sure to happen."

But nothing did happen; nothing at all, except that Arnold was ill because he had eaten the little ones.

Only that evening as Mamma sat with Papa in the basement morning-room that was his study her eyes were red with crying

over Richard's socks, while Papa stiffened in his arm-chair beside her and pretended not to see her.

Richard found them like that when he came in to say good-night.

In the morning he knew that he was to be sent to school at Chelmssted next month.

This, then, was the meaning of his father's clemency.

Arnold Waterlow : A Life

XVII

FOR the thirty-three days that yet remained to him Richard was sacred. It was as if every day of the thirty-three had been his birthday. Even his father seemed to recognise him as a creature set apart and for the time being immune.

Nothing could have been more beautiful than Richard's behaviour in his affliction. He showed no sign of rancour. Only as the days advanced he bore himself with a sweet and terrible solemnity that marked his consciousness of an unjust doom. It was only to him, he seemed to say, that these awful things happened.

And Mamma's eyebrows twitched, and her eyes, as they followed him, darkened with his suffering as if some nerve still bound her to her first-born. And to Arnold's importunities they answered: "*You* are not being sent to school. Can't you see that it's only Richard that matters?"

On the day when Richard went away a dreadful quiet came over the house; a quiet in which a secret irritation stirred and fretted. No sooner had the garden gate closed on him than Charlotte and Arnold and Mamma parted and hid themselves in separate rooms. Over the mid-day dinner they could hardly look at each other's faces. They were all conscious of the gap between Mamma and Charlotte which was Richard's empty chair.

Towards evening Arnold found his mother in the drawing-room alone.

All the drawing-room furniture had been gathered together again and was at peace. The white and green and gold what-nots stood in their corners; the white Angora rug was in its place by the fender, the twinkling glass gaselier hung from the plaster rose of the ceiling, and under it the bird-of-paradise roosted on his tree. At the big window the wine-coloured damask curtains hung as they used to hang at East Ferry. The room had a cramped and diminished likeness to that other room.

Mamma was sitting at her little writing-table that was also a cabinet. The ebony doors, thrown open, hid her from the waist upwards, so that at first Arnold could not see what she was doing. Whatever it was she was so absorbed in it that she did not move as he entered. The right-hand door of the cabinet screened his approach.

He came and stood behind her and looked on.

The cabinet was lined with rosewood. It had two sets of rosewood drawers divided by an ebony panel. One of the drawers was open ; she took from it a small red velvet case and laid it on the writing-table. Then she pressed against the ebony panel ; it slid back and disclosed a little oblong space with a shallow drawer at the top. From this drawer she took another small red velvet case and held it for a moment between her two hands, covering it as if it had been something soft and living that she would have given warmth to, yet was afraid to touch.

She undid the hasps ; the case opened like the cover of a book. She sat looking into it, bowed, and so withdrawn in contemplation that she did not see Arnold as he came nearer to look.

He saw, framed in the red velvet case, the likeness of a young child, a dark and white child. He saw the big dark eyes, the dark hair, parted above one ear and piled over the other, the white shoulders, the blue shoulder-knots, the pale streak of blue sash where the oval ended.

Suddenly Mamma shivered with a long sobbing sigh. She bent down her head to the likeness and kissed it. Then she laid it on the writing-table and opened the other case, and he saw the golden curls and the angelic, insolent, exquisite face of Richard.

Mamma now arranged the two likenesses side by side, the dark child on the right and the golden child on the left ; and Arnold saw a small folded paper lying on the turned-back cover of each case. She unfolded these papers and from each of them she took a flattened curl of infant's hair and held it in the palm of her hand, and kissed it and smoothed it with her finger. Arnold watched in silence. Her movements had the fascination of some mysterious game. She laid each curl out on the red satin lining of its case, a golden curl by Richard's likeness, a dark curl by the likeness of the dark baby.

Arnold was charmed with this arrangement. He put out his finger to touch the likeness that he judged to be his own.

Mamma started and quivered. In an instant she had covered it with her hand to hide it and keep it from his touch.

Arnold Waterlow : A Life

"Oh, Arny," she said, "why didn't you tell me you were there?"

"I didn't know, Mamma. *Why* mayn't I see?"

She did not answer all at once, but sat there looking at him helplessly, like a child found out in its strange and secret play.

"That was *my* hair," said Arnold.

She shook her head; not as if she answered him but as if she were saying to herself, "I can't. I can't."

"Isn't it?" he said.

She sighed; she set her small face resolutely as if she said, "After all, I must."

"No, Arny," she said, "it isn't."

"But—it—it's *me*."

"No. No. Look and you'll see it isn't."

She uncovered the likeness that she had hidden and he looked. Obstinate, he still thought that it was his likeness.

"No," she repeated, "that isn't *you*. That's Tossy, and that's Tossy's hair. There's his name written on the paper. . . . See—you must read it for yourself."

He saw, written in his mother's fine, sharp writing, the words, "Thomas Everett Waterlow. Born at East Ferry, October 29th, 1861. Died, March 31st, 1863."

"You didn't know you had a little brother besides Richard, did you?"

"No," he said. "I didn't. I don't want to know. I wish you hadn't told me."

His voice sounded like somebody else's voice saying something awful. It must have sounded like somebody else's voice to Mamma, for she answered as if she were afraid of him. "Arny, what do you mean?"

"I don't mean anything," he quavered. Nor did he. He didn't know what was the matter with him. He couldn't put into words what he felt about the little dead brother whose likeness should have been his and wasn't. It was as if he had looked into his mother's heart and had found no place for himself there. But her eyes made him frightened and ashamed.

"You never saw him," she said. "He came between you and Charlotte."

"Why didn't I see him?" It was as if he felt that if he had seen him it wouldn't have been quite so bad.

"Darling—he died three days before you were born. He would have been the youngest if you hadn't come."

"Why did he die?" He said it with a savage persistence.

She was tender with him, almost as if she were sorry for him. "He was very ill, Arny—such a little baby to be ill. He couldn't tell you what he was suffering or what he wanted, and I didn't know when he was dying. He lay in the cot——"

"My cot?"

"No. Not your cot." (Under all her tenderness was the thought that he must learn to forget himself; he must be made to feel that he was unimportant.) "A little baby's cot. We'd just put him into it, and he lay there quite quiet, just making a little noise in his throat. Like singing. And the doctor said, 'He isn't in pain any more. That's a happy sound he's making.' And then the singing stopped, and his little lips opened and went sharp and stiff——"

At that he was pierced with the sense of the anguish and terror of death. "Don't!" he said—"Don't. I don't want to hear about it."

She kissed him then. "You needn't mind, Arny. He was beautiful."

"As beautiful as Richard?"

"Well——" She paused, as if she were trying to see clear through a serious question. "Not at first. Richard was always beautiful, from the very day he was born."

Arnold meditated while his mother folded the papers over the little curls again and shut them in their cases and put back each in its own drawer.

"Is anything else in Richard's drawer?" he said presently.

She gave him a black leather case to open. It contained a tinted photograph of Charlotte at four years old, a fat and stolid Charlotte in a plaid frock. In the same drawer he found an envelope with a loose wisp of flaxen hair—Charlotte's hair. That was not what he was looking for, Charlotte's hair.

"Isn't there any likeness of *me*?" he said.

"No, Arny. No, I'm afraid there isn't."

"And you haven't got any of my hair?"

(He was still searching in the drawer.)

"No. None of yours."

"Not a little bit off my Thames tunnel?"

She shook her head.

"If I was dead you wouldn't have cut a bit off and kept it?"

"Arnold," she said gravely, "you're not to ask those questions. And you're not to talk about little Tossy; do you understand?" She paused. "My children are all the same

to me. There isn't any difference between Charlotte and Richard or Richard and you."

He listened, scowling. His passion for her divined her hypocrisy.

She went on, "When God took Tossy from me he sent me you instead."

"I wish He hadn't. I wish he'd taken me from you and sent you Tossy instead. Then——"

"What then?"

"You'd have kept my hair."

XVIII

THE conviction had forced itself on him : Charlotte was getting too old to play.

As long as she had had Richard to play with her she played. For by her long flaxen pigtails Richard held her maturity in check. It was only in her arrogant uprightness that she had played with Arnold. And now, though she would read to him, and walk with him and straighten his ties for him, she would not play with him. Not, that was to say, with any passion and sincerity.

Charlotte abhorred and repudiated her youth. She was eleven years old ; and, as if that was not enough for her, when people asked her how old she was she told them she would be twelve next birthday.

Since Richard was no longer there, Charlotte had become important. She had music-lessons and practised an hour every day of her own accord. She chose the most complicated tunes she could find in " Hymns Ancient and Modern " for singing on Sunday afternoons. She went to Evening Service. Her skirts hung a full inch below her knees and she accompanied her mother in her calls on the curate's wife, the doctor's wife, and on Mrs. Manisty at Vinings.

Mr. Manisty owned Mr. Waterlow's house and its three fellows. He owned the avenue and all its houses and the land that lay north and east of it for more miles than you could see. When you were at Vinings you had left the suburb immeasurably far behind. You entered into the richness and the peace of Essex, of old gardens open to the pastures ; of wide-fronted Georgian houses ; of pink walls powdered with a grey bloom ; of green shutters folded back against pink walls. Charlotte had a secret love for Vinings. She liked to sit in large, beautiful rooms, to stare at strange furniture and strange people, to walk decorously over smooth lawns and through the mazes of the

rose-garden ; to wear her best clothes ; to drink cupfuls of cream instead of milk at tea-time ; and to hear Mr. Manisty expressing his admiration of her pigtails.

She accepted these things with an air of cold incorruptibility, as much as to say, " I am not excited ; I am not impressed ; I am not even interested ; and I think that before long it will be time to go."

In the autumn two children came to stay at Vinings, and Charlotte was invited all by herself to play with them. In return Mamma invited them to play with Arnold. With Arnold, because they were much too young for Charlotte.

Their names were Ormond and Vera Lister. All his life he remembered their names. Vera was his own age and Ormond a year older.

They were fragile children, with white, sharp-pointed faces and long black eyes. All his life he remembered their faces.

He was told that he must be very kind to them, and very gentle, because their father and mother had sent them all the way from India, to be taken care of. And he was not to talk to them about their father and mother, because it would be years before they saw either of them again.

Perhaps, if it had not been for their father and mother, or if it had not rained all afternoon. . . . But no ; in any case they were his guests, and guests were sacred. You might disapprove of them, you might even loathe them ; but from the moment that your garden door opened to them till it closed behind them, by every holy law and tradition they were sacred. Guests chose their own games and you played them whether you liked them or not ; you listened politely to their conversation ; whatever they saw fit to do to you, as far as was possible you endured it. You might fail in all these respects under continuous and extreme provocation and yet be forgiven. But to tell tales of a guest was unpardonable. It was also inconceivable.

Arnold did not like these children with their sharp-pointed faces. Whenever he spoke or looked at them they slid their long eyes towards each other as if they exchanged some secret and unfriendly thought. They had no games of their own and they were not interested in his. They cared neither for the fortifications he was building, nor for his model steamboat, nor for his scrap-book with pictures of the Franco-Prussian War, nor for his tin soldiers, though they were larger than the ordinary kind and included a detachment of Zouaves and superb cavalry and

artillery. At each proposal they shook their small heads in mournful and demure negation.

And it was as if under these refusals there lurked something profound and positive. They had come with some secret compact and preoccupation. They seemed to be waiting for their moment. Each watched the other's face for the signal to let go. Vera's face said, "Is it time?" and Ormond's, "No, not yet."

The wet day wore on, and the puny white things were shaken by a queer merriment; it drove them scuttling into corners to whisper there by themselves, pointed face to pointed face, while their eyes slewed round slantwise toward Arnold. Then they gave each other a little push and broke away, laughing; and their laughter said, "We're not quite ready yet."

With an air of spinning out the time they played a silly game of forfeits in which, whatever Arnold did or didn't do, he had to kiss Vera. He disliked kissing Vera; he disliked her small pointed face that darted up at him; he disliked the pressure of her wide mouth and the nearness and bigness of her long, slanting eyes.

But Vera was his guest and a girl; he had to kiss her if she wanted to be kissed. Kissing Vera was even a righteous act, since it meant the sacrifice of self. He had to stand with her on the round ottoman in the middle of the room to do it. That was part of the forfeit.

It all happened in the play-room. He could always see the bare blond room and its cupboards painted yellow with a thick grain; the deal table under the window with the line of his fortifications broken off as he had left it (Paris was a round tin canister and a pencil case); the chest of drawers where his steamboat stood, her keel supported by a wooden frame; the round ottoman covered with chintz, its pattern of pink roses and grey leaves faded into the white ground.

This play-room was on the top floor, at the front, over the spare room. If you kept the door shut you could make as much noise as you wanted without being heard. Arnold was not at all sure that he cared to be shut up there with the strange children. They bored and worried him. He wanted to go on with his fortifications. He didn't mind as long as Charlotte kept coming upstairs to see what they were doing; and he was counting on their being sent into the garden after tea. But it still rained. Charlotte had her lessons to prepare, and she couldn't stay with him.

He called to her as she was going, " Oh, Charley, don't go ! " But she only shook her head at him and went ; and he was left alone again with Ormond and Vera.

He had a sudden sense of desolation, almost as if he had known

" Let her go," said Ormond. " *We* don't want her."

The two were sitting on the ottoman ; their hands were folded on their knees ; they looked quiet and good. But their eyes darted the signal : " Now she's gone we can begin."

Ormond began

" If we tell you our secrets will you promise not to tell anybody else ? "

" I never tell secrets."

" If we let you play our play you won't tell ? " said Vera.

" Of course I won't tell."

" Even if we're naughty ? "

They were tame ; and he had noticed that tame children were seldom naughty. His mind was running on his fortifications. Except for his fortifications there was nothing in the room that they could break or spoil.

So he said a little wearily, " I suppose so."

" Promise on your word of honour."

" On my word of honour."

There is a naughtiness that rejoices and exalts the soul, both in anticipation and in retrospect ; there is a naughtiness that stimulates for the moment while it lasts, but gives no permanent satisfaction ; and there is a naughtiness that is nothing but sorrow from beginning to end. And all these kinds of naughtiness he knew. But Ormond's and Vera's naughtiness was not like any of them. It had an unforeseen and unknown quality that fascinated him before it frightened him.

It was when he was beginning to get frightened that Charlotte came in.

" Were you playing with them ? " she said.

" Of course he was playing with us," said Ormond.

They had gone. Someone had come for them. With immense relief he turned again to his fortifications. He had a whole hour yet before supper and bedtime.

The Prussians had brought up their artillery and the bombardment of Paris was well in progress when Charlotte came back again. She stood in the doorway, very upright and stiff.

"Mamma wants you," she said. "You're to go to her in the drawing-room at once."

Suddenly and without any warning he began to cry.

His mother was sitting in her chair by the corner of the chimneypiece. A fire burned in the grate against the chill of the wet day. She did not look at him till he stood beside her. Long afterwards he knew that he never loved her more than he loved her at that moment.

"Arny," she said, "what are you crying for?"

"I don't know."

If only he *had* known! If only he had done something, so that he could hide his face against her shoulder and confess it! When he thought of Ormond and Vera he felt unclean, and there was no way of cleansing himself except confession, and he had nothing to confess.

"You *must* know. Were you playing with Ormond and Vera when Charlotte came in?"

"I wasn't playing with them—exactly; but I was playing."

Thus desperately he tried to reconcile truth with honour that forbade him to break his word.

"What do you mean, playing with them and not playing? Was it you who were naughty or they?"

Put like that the question tugged at the very roots of honour.

"Perhaps," he said, "I was—a little."

As he said it he felt all nice and clean again, and he looked for her to stoop down and kiss him and let him go.

It seemed to him that he had been lying at her feet for ages. And still he couldn't realise his punishment; he had an idea that if he only lay there long enough she would relent.

It was inconceivable that she should not kiss him.

She had said that he was to be punished, yet supper and bedtime had occurred in their proper order (bedtime was, if anything, a little late), and he had come to her as usual to say good-night. And she had turned her face away from him. She would not speak to him and she would not kiss him. He had knelt at her knees, sobbing; he had lain at her feet and had tried to kiss them; he had flung himself down on the Angora rug, and his clenched hands still held the locks of the silky hair that he had clutched when he writhed there in his torment. It must have lasted at least half an hour, and in all that time she had sat with her face turned away from him. She had not moved and she had not spoken.

He was crying quietly now.

When the dinner gong sounded at half-past seven, his mother, still keeping her face turned from him, rose and left him. Presently he dragged himself upstairs to his room.

But instead of undressing he stood at his window and stared out over the harvested fields. Above the flats covered with their white stubble the three trees rose up tall and slender. They stood, leaning a little towards each other, as if stranded in the last shallows left by the high flood of the corn.

The three trees were his companions and they comforted him.

He was still looking at them when Catherine, the young housemaid, came in to part his hair and brush it and tuck up his blankets.

As she tucked him up to-night he said, " You might leave the blind up so that I can see out of the window."

He still hoped that Mamma would come up and say good-night to him and kiss him, and that while he waited for her he could still see the three trees.

But when he lay in his bed he could no longer see them. And Mamma did not come.

He lay awake till the window square changed from grey to black, and he began to be afraid. His fear was intelligent and precise. He tried to persuade himself that it was because his mother was ill that she had not come to him. He was afraid that she would die in the night.

She did not die in the night.

And in the morning she kissed him as if nothing had happened ; as if to-day had been the same as yesterday and the day before and the day before that. It was odd that she should forget when he remembered. To him nothing would ever be the same again. He knew fear.

XIX

THAT winter Mr. Baxter committed suicide.

Mr. Baxter lived next door to the Goddens in the third house down the road. You only saw him as he went to and from his business in the City. He always looked as if he didn't want you to see him, shuffling along, and keeping as near as he could to the garden fence, turning his eyes sideways as you came. They said that his business had been going wrong, and he had lost money, and it had preyed on his mind. And so, one evening, he had gone up to his bedroom and killed himself ; and when Mrs. Baxter came up to dress for dinner she found him there, lying on the floor in the dark with his throat cut. You could see the room from the back garden, the one with the long brown curtains. In there behind the brown curtains he had cut his throat.

It was in the papers ; they told you exactly how Mr. Baxter had looked. At night when he went to bed Arnold thought of him, lying on the floor in the dark room ; he saw him when he dreamed, with his sad grey face, and where his throat had been a big red hole. He was afraid to go to bed because of him. He had heard Catherine reading the paper aloud to Martha. They were talking about Mr. Baxter.

He was buried at night. You could hear the noise of the wheels and the neighing of the black hearse horses. Papa looked at Mamma.

" Mr. Baxter's funeral," they said.

Martha said he *wasn't properly buried*. Couldn't be. Outside in the garden, behind the drawing-room window and the barred shutters and the wine-coloured, grey-flowered curtains, Arnold felt that Mr. Baxter stood waiting, not properly buried, never to be properly buried. If you drew back the curtains and the shutters you would see him there, with his grey face and the red hole under it, close up against the window, looking in. And

his shroud would be white on the dark, behind the glassy black pane. He was half a corpse and half a ghost. The hearse carried an empty coffin. They put an empty coffin into the grave in the City of London Cemetery. Mr. Baxter was here, looking in at the window, trying to get into the house.

The next night he knew that he had got in. Mr. Baxter in his shroud waited for him at the turn of the last stair. He stood on the landing. He got into his room. Arnold could feel him there between the window and the foot of the bed. It was no use praying to God to keep him out.

Night after night he dreamed about Mr. Baxter. No use praying to God not to let him dream.

He thought of Mrs. Baxter and the two little Baxters. He wondered why they had not all died of fright. But when you looked out of the window you could see the two little Baxters in their black clothes playing hide-and-seek among the gooseberry-bushes in the back garden, as if nothing had happened.

Arnold thought that very strange. He was sure that if *his* father cut his throat he would fall down dead that minute with grief and fright.

In the Easter holidays Arnold had a birthday. He was nine years old.

His father bought him a stick for a birthday present. It was the most peculiar stick ; red and smooth, with a high polish on it, like mahogany, and a little silver chain fixed to the top of it to carry it by. You couldn't look at it without laughing. His father said he might be sure there wasn't another boy in Essex who had a stick like that.

Arnold *was* sure, so sure that he didn't like to be seen with his stick. Every time when he was going for a walk he said, "Mamma, *must* I take my stick?" And Mamma said, "Of course you must, Arny. It'll hurt poor Papa's feelings if you don't. When he gave it you."

"But," said Arnold, "it makes me feel such a silly ass. It doesn't look like a proper stick."

"Nonsense!" said Mamma. "As if Papa would give you a stick that wasn't proper!"

The worst of it was that Richard didn't like to be seen with him when he had his stick.

"It does make you look a rotten fool," said Richard. "He must have been jolly floppy when he gave it you."

"What would you do if you were me?"

"Do? I'd lose it."

"If," said Arnold, "I only could!"

"Of course you can. You can throw it over that hedge."

They were going past the brook under the plantation by the ford. Arnold meditated a moment, then suddenly the stick went whirling over the hedge into the plantation.

"I've done it now," he said, and laughed. Richard laughed, too, but without subtlety or any feeling for Papa.

They walked on. Arnold felt an immense relief; then, suddenly again, remorse stung him. He was helpless between laughter and remorse. He thought of the stick lying all by itself in the wet jungle of the plantation.

"That wasn't losing it." He giggled hysterically.

"It was. Nobody'll ever find it there. You couldn't find it yourself."

"I believe I could. Richard—I wish I hadn't done it. It was a beastly thing to do when p-poor Papa g-gave it me."

"He'd no business to give it you."

"He thought I'd like it."

He stood still. Then he turned and went back again, slowly, towards the ford.

"Hi! What are you up to?" shouted Richard.

"I'm going to get that st-st-stick," said Arnold, still stammering with hysteria.

"It was just here," he thought. There was a gap in the hedge where he had thrown the stick over. He jumped the brook and pushed through the gap. The stick lay a yard or two away sunk in the swampy ground. It was smeared with mud and there was a scar on its polish where it had struck a tree. That took off some of its dreadful newness.

"You *are* a silly ass!" said Richard.

"I'm not. I'm only sorry for Papa," said Arnold, and laughed again.

"You needn't be. He's never sorry for us."

Next Saturday, Arnold's father took him to a football match. It was clear that he was in a floppy mood, otherwise, as Richard said, he wouldn't have thought of it. And he was trying to annoy Mamma by not asking Richard.

Ilford was playing Forest Gate. They went to Forest Gate in the train and walked to the ground with the Ilford team. Arnold was proud of being seen with the tall, muscular men in shorts and striped jerseys. Two of them carried the goal-posts

and Arnold went beside them ; he had to run to keep up with their quick, swinging stride.

Mr. Larkin was playing with the Ilford team. He lived in the avenue, but the Waterlows did not know him. He came up to Arnold on the football field and stood before him, very tall and strong, looking down at him and grinning.

" Well," he said, " you're a noice little cup o' tea."

And then he looked at Arnold's stick and Arnold's face swelled up, all hot and red with shame. He felt that everybody in the field was looking at him and thinking what an ass he was to have a stick like that. He tried to hold it so as to hide as far as possible the chain.

When the match was over there was a rush for the public-houses. Down the pale grey street where the lines of sooty yellow brick houses came together, the Red Lion stood corner-wise, holding out a great green shield with " Ind, Coope & Co." on it in gold letters. You could see the marbled yellow pillars of the porch with the gilded capitals, and the immense hanging glass lamp shining with its cut stars ; on the parapet above it a blood-red lion marched, lashing his tail.

Mr. Waterlow went with Mr. Larkin, talking to him very affably, and they turned together into the Red Lion. Arnold thought his father must be floppy indeed to make friends with Mr. Larkin. He didn't exactly know what Richard meant by floppiness, but he recognised it as a state of singular amiability in which his father did the most unlikely things. Richard said that some day, when he was floppy enough, you would find him talking to the Goddens. Arnold had come to dread a floppy mood, for it was apt to be followed by a savage irritability that terrified Mamma and made her cry.

As Mr. Waterlow turned into the Red Lion with Mr. Larkin he told Arnold to wait for him at the door.

It seemed to Arnold that he waited there for hours. The stinging, choking smell of alcohol streamed through the open doorway. It caught at his throat, making him feel sick and giddy. Inside, two mutes with flaming faces, grotesque and hideous in their bunched weepers, staggered against the bar. Arnold knew that they were drunk.

And his father was in the bar, too, drinking with Mr. Larkin.

When they came out Mr. Larkin said something about catching the train and ran off very fast towards the station. Arnold and his father followed. Mr. Waterlow carried himself very straight and stiff, balancing himself affectedly and putting

his feet down with exaggerated care. When Arnold spoke to him he didn't answer, and his face had a queer, uneasy look, as though he were holding liquid in his mouth.

It was on the platform, as they hurried to the Ilford train, that he began to reel. A porter took him by the arm and dragged him along ; Arnold jumped first into the open carriage ; he seized his father's arm and pulled him ; the porter pushed from behind. In the struggle Arnold's stick slipped from him and dropped on to the line. Mr. Waterlow saw it go ; he stooped ; he made a sudden plunge, groping in the space between the step and the platform. Then Arnold saw him sink along the side of the train and fall as it started. The porter heaved him up on to his feet ; he pushed and Arnold pulled. and Mr. Waterlow tumbled head downwards into the carriage. The porter slammed the door on him, running beside the train.

Mr. Waterlow crawled along the floor of the carriage and finally climbed into his seat. Arnold, in the far corner, glanced at him from time to time with frightened eyes. He was afraid of his father and ashamed of him and sorry for him all at once. And he was glad that they were alone in the carriage without anybody to see him.

Going home from Ilford station, Mr. Waterlow, with a hand on Arnold's shoulder, steered himself carefully along the High Street and over the bridge. Further on, where the elms stood up in the path, he began to stagger and tack, parting from Arnold with violent lurches, falling against the trees and being flung off from them.

Suddenly he stopped. He stood before Arnold, swaying, as if any minute he would come down on the top of him.

"Mar-mar-supupial," he said. "Go on home. Hear warra say ? Go on home. Ske-skedaddle."

And Arnold ran home. He ran headlong, his heart thumping with a mad excitement and terror. A little way from the elm-trees he met Mr. Godden. Nothing could stop Mr. Godden seeing Papa as he passed. He wondered whether he ought to turn back. But Papa had told him to go on home.

He could see the pillars and the great white pine-cones of the avenue. When he got home he would have to tell Mamma. He would have to tell her Papa had been drinking. He was drunk ; drunk, like the mutes in the Red Lion. And when he told Mamma she would cry.

He knew it now, her sad secret that she had tried to keep

from them. His father drank. It would hurt her to know that he knew.

Mamma was in the spare room, sorting linen. When he saw her he began to cry. She started and came to him.

"Army—what is it?"

"Papa——"

"Oh—— He isn't hurt?"

"No. No." He knew no way of breaking it to her. "He—he can't walk properly——"

She stared at him. Her face flamed, suddenly red; her mouth shook.

"He's *drunk*." He sobbed it out.

She held him in her arms and kissed him, and he cried, his face hidden on her shoulder. When he raised his head he saw her looking at him; her look was humble and ashamed, as if she had wronged him and was sorry.

"Poor Army," she said.

And then, "Tell Richard to come to me."

Richard came. For Richard, too, she had that look that asked him to forgive her.

"Richard, your father isn't very well. You must go and meet him, and help him home."

Richard looked sulky and unwilling. "Must I?"

"Yes. You must. He might fall down in the road. And somebody might find him."

"I see. He's drunk again. I knew he would be. It's always that when he gets floppy."

(So that was what Richard meant. He had always known.)

"For shame, Richard! Go and do as I tell you."

Richard, very sulky, went.

And Arnold, looking out of the spare-room window, saw the return. Papa came through the avenue gates, uncertainly and unwillingly, supported by Richard on one side and by Mr. Godden on the other. Mr. Godden had found him and was bringing him home when Richard met them.

"If," said Mamma, "it had been anybody but Mr. Godden."

Mr. Godden's face had been kind and sad. He was sorry for Papa. Arnold thought of the porter at Forest Gate who had been kind too. And suddenly he remembered that he had dropped his stick. It was lying on the rails at Forest Gate station. It was lost; lost for ever; lost honourably, without any fault of his own.

That was something to be thankful for.

Mr. Godden was busy again with his bedding-out plants, and very soon his lawn was gay with its inlaid pattern of scarlet and blue, geraniums and lobelias. Mrs. Waterlow had a contempt for that kind of gardening, and thought it showed the suburban vulgarity of Mr. Godden. *Her* garden was like a country posy, all sorts of sweet-smelling flowers gathered carelessly together. Once or twice she fancied she had caught Mr. Godden observing it with disapproval, and sometimes he looked as though he were about to say something. Then Mrs. Waterlow pretended not to see him.

Since Mr. Godden had found Papa and brought him home Mamma had been more afraid than ever that he would speak to her. You could see she hated him because he had found Papa. But Mr. Godden did not speak. Ever since that day he would turn away delicately when he saw Mamma in the garden, as if he understood that she didn't want him to look at her.

Nobody knew what Mr. Godden was. Papa said he kept a grocer's shop in the City. But Papa didn't really know. Only once, Mr. Godden had been seen running out into the road, wearing a white linen apron fastened behind with a brass triangle, and it was felt that he had given himself away very painfully. For the moment even Mamma forgot that he wasn't to be spoken to, and wondered whether somebody oughtn't to go out and tell him that he had his apron on, in case he didn't know ; but when Arnold offered to go she thought better of it and said sharply that she wouldn't have him running after the Goddens. " You know you're not to speak to them."

" Why not ? " said Arnold.

" Because I won't have you picking up a cockney accent and goodness knows what manners."

And all the time he wanted to speak to them, to know what they were like ; when the midsummer holidays came and the happy voices of Albert, Wilfrid and Winifred were heard shouting in the back garden, he longed to go out to them and play.

Richard and Charlotte hated them even worse than Mamma.

They had names for them. Albert was Skunk, Wilfrid, for some obscure reason, was Foodle, and Winifred was Goggles. They talked about the Goddens as though they had no business to live next door to well-born and well-bred people like the Waterlows, who hadn't got cockney accents. Richard said they jolly well knew they had no business, that was why old mother Godden hadn't had the cheek to call.

Then one afternoon she did call.

It was in the beginning of the holidays. Mamma and Charlotte and Arnold were in the drawing-room when she came. She was dressed in her best, the purple silk gown and the white bonnet trimmed with moss rosebuds that she wore in church, and the handle of her sunshade was a parrot, red and green. Her face simmered with a hot, kind smile.

Mamma told Charlotte to go out of the room ; but Arnold was hidden behind her chair reading a book, and she didn't see him. So he stayed and listened to the conversation. He heard Mrs. Godden say she hoped Mamma would forgive her for not calling before, but she had thought that she might not care for her to call.

Mamma said " Oh—— " in a funny little quiet voice. And Mrs. Godden said she thought it was very unfriendly for next-door neighbours not to know each other.

And Mamma said nothing at all. Then Mrs. Godden said she had noticed that Mamma was fond of gardening, as if that were another reason for calling, and Mamma said she was very fond of gardening indeed, in a voice that implied that she knew Mrs. Godden wasn't, and thought the less of her for that. And Mrs. Godden said she was entirely occupied with her house and children, and left gardening to Mr. Godden, and she had often wondered how Mamma found time for it.

" Why, Mrs. Waterlow, I see you working from morning till night."

And Mamma answered that she was occupied with her house and children too (as if Mrs. Godden had said that she neglected them) and *that* was the reason why she had no time for calling.

Then Mrs. Godden began to talk about Mr. Godden. Mr. Godden was such a kind man and so fond of his children. Devoted he was. Mr. Godden was sacrificing everything for their education. He was sending Albert and Wilfrid to a public school next term, and afterwards they would go to the London University. So would Winifred. Winifred was learning Latin. Winifred was studying music at the Royal Academy, her master said she had quite a talent. Mrs. Godden hoped that Mamma had not been annoyed by her practising, and Mamma said she hadn't noticed it, which was not strictly true. And Mrs. Godden said they had such a happy family life together. Mr. Godden was reading Jules Verne aloud to them in the evenings. Had Mamma read Jules Verne? And Mamma replied that she had *not*. Arnold couldn't see Mamma, but he felt sure that she was

sitting up, stiff with resentment, and he could tell by the little twirl in her voice what she thought of Mrs. Godden.

At last Mrs. Godden said, "Where are you going for the mid-summer holidays?"

And Mamma, "We aren't going anywhere."

And Mrs. Godden, "Oh, that's a pity. Don't you think one needs a change? Mr. Godden is taking us all to Ilfracombe for part of August and September. We shall be away a month. So good for the children to get away. Essex is so relaxing."

And Mamma said Mrs. Godden was very lucky.

"I am," said Mrs. Godden, and smiled at her, simmering.

And then she discovered Arnold hiding behind Mamma's chair, and he was sent out of the room. And soon after Mrs. Godden went away.

That evening he heard Mamma talking about it to Papa.

"Joseph," she said, "Mrs. Godden called this afternoon."

"What damned impertinence!" said Papa.

"She didn't think so."

"Well, what did you talk about?"

"Mrs. Godden talked. She began by patronising me. Then she told me I worked too much in my garden and neglected my husband and children, and what a nice husband she had and what clever children, and how much happier her home was than mine, and how I was an ignorant woman who had never heard of Jules Verne, and how they could afford to go to Ilfracombe and I couldn't."

"Oh, Mamma," said Arnold, "she didn't say all that!"

"Well, she made me feel it," said Mamma.

You could see she disliked Mrs. Godden more than ever because she had a happy home and a kind husband who didn't drink but read Jules Verne aloud in the evenings, and because he was taking them to Ilfracombe. And she returned Mrs. Godden's call on a day when she knew she was not at home.

In the end, everybody, except Papa and Arnold, went to the seaside. Aunt Sarah at Liverpool had asked Mamma to stay with her at Llandudno for the first fortnight in August; she was to bring the three children; but Mamma said she didn't want to trespass on Aunt Sarah's kindness, so she left Arnold behind.

That was how Arnold came to know the Goddens.

Mrs. Godden had seen him playing by himself in the garden while the others were away, and she had written to Papa

and asked him if his little boy might come in and spend the afternoon. And as Papa was in a floppy mood he let him go.

"And do you mean to say you went?" said Richard. They had come home again.

"Of course I went."

"It was very naughty of you," said Mamma.

"Papa let me."

"You know *I* wouldn't have let you if I'd been there."

"And you know," Richard said, "*he* wouldn't have let you if he hadn't been floppy."

"Hush, Richard!"

"Well but, I wanted to go."

"Ugh! Fancy the little beast wanting to go and play with Skunk and Foodle."

Mamma wailed. "It's the thin end of the wedge. And now it'll be hail-fellow-well-met, every time you see each other. There'll be talking through the railing and out of the windows, and Mrs. Godden'll think she can run in and out as often as she likes."

"But really, Mamma, they're awfully decent. And clever. They know a lot of things. Did you know that we can see the light from a star that's gone out millions and millions of years ago? That's because it's so far away that it takes millions and millions of years for its light to get here. Wilfrid told me that."

"How does he know?"

"Mr. Godden told him."

"Jolly lot *he* knows."

"He does. He's ever so clever. And he's got more books than we've got. Thousands and thousands of books he's got. He's cleverer than Papa."

It turned out that Arnold was right. Mr. Godden was the best read man in Ilford. Mr. Manisty said so, Dr. Draper said so, Mr. Marriott the vicar, and Mr. Farmer the curate, said so. And his children were clever, too.

"They may be as clever as they please," said Mamma. "I'm glad *my* children can speak like little ladies and gentlemen."

Arnold was told that he might be polite to the Goddens when he saw them, but he was never to play with them—never, Arnold, do you hear me?—again.

Still, he had found out three things. Mr. Godden was ever

so much cleverer than Papa. Mr. Godden was not a grocer, he was the biggest tea-merchant in the City. Mr. Godden was an infidel. He didn't believe in God and Jesus, and he only went to church to please Mrs. Godden.

Wilfrid said so.

XX

THE big school-house stood up over the play-ground with its red-brick façade, the pointed gables of its top story, its jutting bow-windows framed in freestone, and the long barracks of its wings.

The caked gravel of the play-ground was hot and yellow, only at the far end the slanting wall of the fives court laid on it the black triangle of its shadow.

It was Arnold's first day at Chelmssted, the first day of the midsummer term, eighteen-seventy-five. For six months he had thought of Chelmssted with mingled excitement and mis-giving. It meant being twelve and going into trousers. It meant learning Latin and Greek from masters who really knew those languages instead of Mr. Sippett whom he had discovered to be only a page or two ahead of him in the Latin Grammar and nowhere in Greek. Latterly, so far from being taught, he had been teaching his tutor. He was ready for Chelmssted.

But Chelmssted meant leaving Ilford and Mamma. It also meant seeing a lot of other fellows, and he had gathered from Richard that the other fellows might give him a pretty rotten time. It would depend on whether he made himself popular or not; and Richard seemed to think that the chances of his popularity were anything but certain.

What else Chelmssted might mean to him was as yet hidden from Arnold.

The groups had scattered into corners and Arnold found himself in the hot, bare centre of the play-ground. He knew it wouldn't be "form" to approach a group or speak to any boy without being spoken to; so he walked up and down the play-ground with his hands in his trouser pockets trying to look detached. He was sustained by his consciousness that he was in trousers. And any minute Richard might come to him. Richard had told him to go into the play-ground and wait for him there.

Above the high wall he could see the narrow gables and bays

of Mr. Hyslop's house where he and Richard were. A door in the wall opened into Mr. Hyslop's garden.

This door opened and two boys came out. The sun shone on two pairs of round glasses, and Arnold recognised the blond heads of Albert and Wilfrid Godden.

Albert at sixteen was pale and tall and thin, loose-jointed, narrow-jawed, a little solemn. Wilfrid at fourteen was sturdy and thick-set, his face square with full, round corners, his forehead wide and high ; under it, behind the big gold-rimmed glasses, his thick blue eyes twinkled. His rather small, rather close mouth quivered with amusement. He was pinker than Albert. Arnold knew that they were at Chelmssted and in Mr. Hyslop's house, but in the excitement of arrival he had forgotten them. The case of their meeting had been provided for. His orders were to have no more to do with them than he could help.

Albert and Wilfrid were making for the centre of the playground ; they were approaching him ; they smiled as they came. They were glad to see him. There wasn't another boy in Chelmssted who would smile at him and be glad to see him.

He had had no plan. He had not considered what he would do if the Goddens spoke to him. But his orders left a loophole. He couldn't help their speaking to him ; he couldn't help their smiling and being glad to see him. He couldn't help smiling back and being glad to see *them*.

It was Wilfrid who spoke. " I say, Waterlow, we saw you out of the window and we thought it must be rather rotten for you, mouching about by yourself. So we came."

" I was waiting for Richard."

" Well, he won't be here for ages," said Albert. " They've got hold of him."

" Who have ? "

" Why, his crowd ; the fellows he goes with."

" You'll be pretty well out of it," said Wilfrid, " if you don't belong to one of their silly sets."

" The thing," said Albert, " is to get into a decent one at the start."

" How do you get in ? "

" You don't get in. You're got in by somebody."

" Richard'll get me in. He knows lots of the Lower School."

Albert and Wilfrid looked at each other. A queer look. And there was a silence.

Then Wilfrid said, " You read, don't you ? "

" Yes. Why ? "

"Because they won't let you, those fellows."

"They can't stop me."

"They'll do their best, the little devils."

"I don't think I want to be in their set, then."

"We thought perhaps you wouldn't, if you knew."

Arnold began to feel uncomfortable. He didn't want to be in Richard's set if they stopped his reading. On the other hand, Richard had told him that all the Upper School cads in Hyslop's house belonged to Albert's set, and all the Lower School cads to Wilfrid's. He liked the Goddens, he couldn't help liking them, but he didn't want to be drawn into Wilfrid's set. He wondered whether they were trying to draw him in. But no: they merely offered to show him the fives court. And when they had looked at the fives court Richard came out through the garden door.

As he saw the Goddens his beautiful, insolent face was red and hard. You could see he was not going to have anything to do with them. But it seemed that the Goddens were not going to have anything to do with Richard. They nodded at him and went away without speaking.

Richard drew Arnold into the shadow of the wall.

"Look here, that won't do. I can't have you going about with Skunk and Foodle."

"They're not half bad. Really, they're not."

"They're howling cads."

"They're not. I can't cut them when they're in our house. I can't be such a beastly snob."

"If you don't all the decent fellows will cut you."

"I don't care. *They* must be beastly snobs too."

"And I'm a beastly snob, am I?"

"Yes. If you cut them. Just because their father sells tea."

"The Pater's a snob, then?"

"Well—yes."

"And the Mater, too?"

Arnold was silent.

"Look here, you silly ass. Do you want the decent fellows to take you up, or do you want to be a rotten outsider?"

Arnold clenched his teeth, choking down his anger. He didn't want to quarrel with Richard; he felt it would be bad form to quarrel with his brother. Whatever happened he must stick to him. But he didn't mean to be dictated to by Richard.

"There's another thing," said Richard. "You mustn't go swotting out of school hours. Fellows won't stand it."

"I shall swot as much as I like. They'll have to stand it."

"I tell you they won't. They'll think you're showing off. Nobody's going to believe you're reading the Iliad for fun."

"I don't care what they think."

"I say, young 'un, you'll have to halve that side. It won't go down here."

"Why should I care what a lot of rotten idiots think?" Arnold was now thoroughly enraged.

"I care," said Richard. "You ought to think of me. I've got a position in the house and you haven't. There's another thing. It doesn't matter what you say when we're alone; but if you cheek me before fellows I shall have to lick you."

"I wouldn't do that. Not because I'm afraid of your licking me, but because whatever you do I suppose I'll have to stick up for you."

"I'm not sure," said Richard meditatively, "that *that's* not cheek."

Arnold soon found that most of what Richard said was true. He wasn't popular. Richard's friends in the Lower School fought shy of him because he liked reading Homer and Virgil out of school and because he went with the Goddens, and didn't care what anybody thought. Wilfrid, smiling and twinkling, came to him every day to see how he was getting on. Wilfrid didn't think it queer that he should read Homer and Virgil out of school and talk about them. Wilfrid let him talk. Wilfrid was going in for Natural History. He had a fine collection of bird's eggs, butterflies and beetles; he was always picking up things in ponds and woods and places; he kept silkworms, dormice and a pet newt. And he had a microscope. Wilfrid, better known, turned out to be a most exciting person. On half-holidays he would take Arnold out for long walks into the country, collecting insects, and he would let him play with his microscope as much as he liked. But this friendship was founded originally on arithmetic. It sprang into being on the day when Wilfrid found Arnold vainly endeavouring to find the square root of minus one.

"I don't believe," he said, "there is one."

"There isn't," said Wilfrid. "That's Raddles's little joke."

Mr. Radford, the arithmetic master, was given to little jokes.

And by the time Wilfrid had shown Arnold how to extract the cube root of seven hundred and twenty-nine, and had worked several sums for him, besides helping him with his algebra, their friendship had become a thing so firm that nothing could upset it. Albert was in the Sixth Form and had a study; he

was great in mathematics and inaccessible. Arnold knew that Chelmssted pronounced the Goddens "tame, domestic," but he didn't care; nobody could say the same of him. He was too good at games; he could run and jump and box and wrestle better than any other boy of his age. He was Waterlow major's brother, and Waterlow major was the most popular boy in the Upper School. And so Waterlow minor, though obnoxious, was respected, and his attachment to Skunk and Foodle was counted to him as an eccentricity rather than a crime.

Six weeks passed, and he was happy at Chelmssted.

"Ton d' ar' hypodra idon prosephe podasokus Achilleus."

The voices of the Lower School drowned his Greek. Wilkins minimus was chanting a Lay of Ancient Rome; Nicholson minor was making farmyard noises; little Grigley was giving one of his incomparable imitations of Dr. Binyon, the Headmaster.

Three times Nicholson major, called Snooker, had placed his white mouse on the back of Arnold's neck, and three times Arnold had removed the white mouse. Snooker was a big, top-heavy boy with a face like a bull.

"Ton d' ar' hypodra idon prosephe podasokus Achilleus.' That'll do, Snooker."

"Ho trumpets, sound a war-note!
Ho lictors, clear the way!
The Knights will ride in all their pride
Along the streets to-day."

"Shut up, Wilkins, or I'll lick you."

"To-day the doors and windows
Are hung with garlands all,
From Castor in the Forum,
To Mars without the wall——!"

"Cock-a-leary—crow-ow!"

"This way, Mrs. Snooker, if you please. We shall find the little fellow among his class-mates. He has made very gratifying progress in his studies this term. Very gratifying indeed. . . . *This way.* Take care of the step. May I offer you a cup of tea? The cup that cheers but not inebriates. . . . If you saw him eat you would be under no apprehension. . . . You *think* so? Matron shall give the little fellow a dose of castor-oil. Yes, Mrs. Snooker, *all* the latest sanitary improvements. . . . Allow me. Good-day to you. *Good-day.*"

And now they were whispering, Snooker and little Grigley, making a beastly mystery about something. Names sounded through the whispers.

"Waterlow major."

"Who with?"

"Plunkett and Hanbury and young St. John."

Richard—Richard. The blood swirled in Arnold's head. He knew what they meant. But it was a lie. A lie.

"Oh, Lord!" said little Grigley.

"He'd better look out or he'll be sacked," said Snooker.

"Bound to be."

"Serve him jolly well right, the skunk."

Arnold started up. He faced Snooker.

"It's a lie," he screamed. "I'll lick you for that."

"We'll see who's licked," said Snooker.

The fight took place in the fives court behind the screen of its projecting wall.

Arnold, quick with his feet and hands, struck home three times under Snooker's guard. While Snooker lumbered, hitting out heavily, Arnold danced round him sideways and landed a blow on his jaw that infuriated Snooker. They closed together in a savage embrace, each trying to throw the other. In wrestling Snooker's size and weight began to tell. He twisted his foot round Arnold's ankle and Arnold fell backwards violently with the big boy straddling on the top of him, hitting him as he lay.

And now Snooker's knees pressed into his stomach while Snooker's fists pounded his face and chest. Blood from his nose ran down his throat and choked him. He gasped for breath, spluttering blood.

Then Albert and Wilfrid Godden came up and separated them, pulling Snooker off by his shirt collar and the slack of his trousers.

"I wouldn't mind, if I'd only licked him," said Arnold as he bathed his nose in the lavatory basin. Wilfrid stood by him, brushing the dust off him behind.

"You can't lick hippopotamuses," said Wilfrid.

"I'd have been all right if he hadn't got me down. I landed him a beauty on his jaw."

He was proud to have fought for Richard even if he had got the worst of it. He thought that Richard would be pleased because he had fought for him.

But Richard was furious; and under his fury there was

something secret and afraid. His white, angry face flashed fear.

"You ought to have let it alone, you young idiot."

"I couldn't stick there and hear him lying about you."

"You'd no business to listen."

"I couldn't help listening. He'd no business to say things."

"Can't you see, you young ape, that rowing about it only rubs it in? If you'd wanted the whole school to know you couldn't have done better."

"I wanted the whole school to know he lied. That was the way to show them."

"Oh, was it! If one of the masters gets hold of it he'll think there was something in it."

"But if there isn't——"

He could see Richard's eyes slinking from his, afraid.

"That makes no difference. If the masters once get that idea into their silly heads you can't get it out. They'll have us all sacked—me and Hanbury and Plunkett and St. John, and it'll be all your beastly meddling. I'd lick you for it if you hadn't been so jolly well trounced already."

"I landed him a good one on the jaw," said Arnold.

It was odd, but Albert and Wilfrid Godden took Richard's view.

"You might get him sacked. You see," Albert said, "you've drawn attention to it."

"To what?"

"Well, to what's supposed to go on."

"But you don't imagine Richard has anything to do with it? You don't think—do you—that Snooker didn't lie?"

"I don't think anything," said Albert. "I only know that Richard goes about with a pretty rotten set."

"That's why we've tried to put you off them," Wilfrid said.

"I didn't know you meant *that*," said Arnold.

He meditated. He remembered Richard's secretive frightened face when he told him about the fight. He had conceived a dreadful, an intolerable doubt of Richard. Supposing Snooker hadn't lied?

"It might be true," he said, "of Plunkett and Hanbury and St. John and not true of Richard."

"It might," Albert said, "but he doesn't do himself any good by being seen with them."

Every day Arnold looked for something to happen. But nothing did.

Not till the midsummer holidays came round did he know that Mr. Waterlow had received a letter from Dr. Binyon requesting him to remove his son Richard at the end of term. He said that Richard had a pernicious influence on the younger boys.

And Richard said it was all Arnold's fault.

Mamma wanted to remove Arnold from Chelmsted too, as a protest against Richard's expulsion and an intimation that Chelmsted was no fit school for an innocent boy ; but Papa wouldn't let her. He said he had no doubt that the elder marsupial had richly deserved what he had got, and that in any case Chelmsted was the only good public school he knew of that didn't charge exorbitant fees.

And for a whole week of the holidays Mamma was annoyed with Arnold because of his meddling, and because he had made friends with the Goddens in open defiance of his mother's will.

XXI

ARNOLD got out of bed and went to the open window. The three tall elms stood up above the ripening corn. The sunrise stretched behind them, a long narrow strand of saffron and rose and gold, lying low to the grey earth.

Suddenly the rim of a burning disc came up, piercing the coasts of dawn.

The sun. It burst its bands of saffron and rose, and swung, a flaming wheel, clear of the trees, pure gold-white in the white sky.

Arnold went back to bed. He took a book from under his pillow and began to read.

"My heart aches and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk. . . ."

The first time. The first incomparable thrill, the first encounter with new magic, with the unknown strange beauty. And yet it was as if he had always known it, so sudden was his recognition, so complete his joy.

"Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird !
No hungry generations tread thee down :
The voice I heard this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown :
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn ;
The same that oft-times hath
Charmed magic casements opening on the foam
Of perilous seas in fairylands forlorn."

.

When and where had he heard that before ? Never and not anywhere. Yet all his life he had been waiting for it, listening

for that enchanted cadence, that coming together of immortal words. It had nothing to do with time, it *had been* through all eternity, flowing for ever and ever through the mind of God, until Keats heard it.

Mr. Godden had told him about Keats. He had lent him the book.

Before that it had been Shelley. And there were Coleridge and Swinburne and Rossetti and Browning yet to come.

Arnold worshipped Mr. Godden because of Shelley and Keats. He could never pay back the debt he owed him. There were only two lives to live, sharply divided from each other, the life before Keats and the life after. Mr. Godden had opened the golden doors.

And Mamma hated him.

The music was wonderful.

Arnold sat on the floor in the Goddens' drawing-room, the shabby, friendly drawing-room furnished in walnut-wood and green rep, and full of books. Books behind the glass doors of the walnut-wood cases, books strewn on the tables, books piled against the walls, overflowing from the dining-room and study. Albert and Wilfrid, curled up on the green rep sofa, were reading. Mr. and Mrs. Godden leaned back in their arm-chairs with their hands folded on their stomachs, and listened to Winifred's playing.

Arnold sat on the floor at Winifred's side and listened. He watched the firm, clever hands flying up and down the keys, creeping, sliding, lifting and coming down, pressing out the loud noble chords. She was playing Beethoven, the "Waldstein Sonata."

The strings of the piano throbbed with the emotion of her fifteen years' old adolescence, her pale mouth quivered with ecstasy, her small, flat body quivered; every now and then she jerked her head, tossing back her blond, crimped hair.

And Arnold came into the strange new world of sounds: exquisite, mysterious sounds that ran like water, sounds that stood still, throbbing; beautiful, passionate sounds that caught at his heart and shook it. He worshipped Winifred Godden for the sounds she made.

She was not pretty, with her sallow-white face, her long nose, wide and flattened at the nostrils, her small pale mouth, her skim-milk eyes behind the big glasses; the stiff-spreading fan of her crimped hair.

"Thank you, my dear," said Mr. Godden, and Mrs. Godden said, "Thank you, Winny dear." They were all polite to each other. Even Albert and Wilfrid looked up from their books and said, "Thanks."

Arnold said nothing. He was too excited.

She had finished. Her hands lay still in her lap. She swung round on her stool and looked at him. Her eyes were tender behind their watery glasses; her mouth smiled its stiff, shy smile.

"How nicely you listen," she said. "You listen with your eyes."

"Do I?"

"Yes. Do you like my playing?"

"I like it awfully."

"I'm glad you like it."

"Can I come again and hear it?"

"What's that he's saying?" Mr. Godden asked.

"He wants to know if he can come again."

"He knows he can come as often as he likes."

"He can't come too often," Mrs. Godden said.

They were so kind, so utterly kind, and their kindness shamed him. He could go to them, but he could never ask them back again into his father's house.

Two years had passed. It had taken him two years to establish his right to go to the Goddens; two years of incessant struggling against his mother's will. At first he could only meet Wilfrid on the neutral ground of the avenue and the fields beyond it. They escaped together into the open country. Mamma seemed to think that Wilfrid's society was less contaminating in the open country than in his father's house. Arnold was, at any rate, free from contact with the other Goddens. He was allowed, under a wailing protest, to stand on the Goddens' doorstep to receive and return the books they lent him, but whatever he did he was not to go further than the doorstep. He was always being told that he, or "it" was not to go any further. But every now and then he went in, surreptitiously, to choose a book. Whenever he did this he confessed honourably to Mamma.

Mamma always spoke as if Arnold was a victim of the Goddens; as if he didn't want to go to them and only went because of some iniquitous compulsion that they used. She couldn't believe that Arnold could be so perverse as to *like* the Goddens. She looked with particular disfavour on this borrowing of books.

"They only lend them," she said, "to entice you in."

She had found Mr. Godden's Shelley on her drawing-room table. She tossed her head at it and pouted her lower lip. All his life Arnold had adored his mother, but in these moments he almost disliked her.

"They lend them because I asked for them," he said.

"And what did you do that for? You talk as if nobody had any books but Mr. Godden. Why can't you read your father's books?"

"He hasn't got the ones I want. He hasn't got Shelley or Keats or Browning or Swinburne or Rossetti."

"Bless me, what do you want with that Swinburne and that Rossetti? Can't you be content with your Shakespeare and your Tennyson?"

Again it was her will against his, her intense, small, driving will, against all the things he loved and wanted most. Always he would have to fight her, or give in and go under; always his love for her would fight against him, and for the pain he gave her he would get more pain. Why couldn't they love each other like the Goddens and be happy together, without pain?

He couldn't be content with Shakespeare and Tennyson. It was the unknown beauty that he wanted: the poem he hadn't read, the music he hadn't heard. He was in a terrible hurry about it. All the poetry in the English language wouldn't satisfy him. He wanted Greek poetry and Latin; German, French and Italian poetry; Chinese poetry, if there was any.

The Goddens understood this.

When Mrs. Godden wrote and asked him to come in one evening for music there was a supreme struggle with Mamma.

"You're not going," she stated. Even now she couldn't believe that he could really want to go.

"I am," he said.

Mrs. Waterlow took a threatening line. "Very well, Arnold, you must choose between them and me."

He knew that was all nonsense; the question wouldn't arise. His mother was taking a mean advantage of his love for her. He said it was all nonsense. He tried to reason with her. "Don't you see, mother, they're my friends and I can't go back on them."

"You think nothing of going back on your mother. They never ought to have been your friends."

"I can't help that now. They are. And I'd be a perfect beast to chuck them."

"And am I to be drawn in, am I to know Mrs. Godden?"

"Mrs. Godden doesn't want to know you. She hasn't called again. Has she?"

His mother owned that Mrs. Godden had not repeated her impertinence.

"It's Charlotte I mind for," she said.

"You needn't. She won't have to know them. They don't want to know anybody but me."

"Because you've encouraged them. If—if the plumber asked you to tea I believe you'd go. You can't say No, to anybody."

"I don't want to say No. It's all very well for you, mother; you hate them."

"I don't hate them; that wouldn't be Christian."

"You don't like them."

"No. I don't like them."

"Well, I do. I'll do anything you want except chuck them. I—I'll work in the garden. You see, they've been so awfully decent to me."

"You oughtn't ever to have let them," she moaned.

"You oughtn't to have sent me to Chelmsed then. I must have *some* friends."

"Richard was at Chelmsed, and he didn't make friends with the Goddens. Why couldn't you know Richard's friends? Then you'd have had plenty."

Richard's friends: Hanbury, Plunkett and St. John. Beasts. If Mamma only knew—— But he couldn't tell her. He only said, "Because I don't want to."

"You are the most perverse boy I ever knew. Arnold—why are you such a trouble to me?"

"I don't know. I think we're a trouble to each other."

He said it so funnily that Mamma smiled and surrendered.

"Well," she said, "go to your Goddens. Only don't bring them here."

"They wouldn't come," he said, "if you paid them."

But before the autumn Mrs. Godden had called again.

It was because of Albert.

In the midsummer holidays Albert had typhoid fever and he nearly died. Mamma and Charlotte were sorry: even Richard said mournfully, "We can't call him Skunk any more." Every day Mamma sent Arnold in to enquire for Albert. She called on Mrs. Draper, the doctor's wife, to find out how ill Albert really was. Tears came into her eyes when she heard that he was in danger. When the crisis came she said she could think of

nothing but those poor Goddens. Every night and morning she prayed that Albert might not die. She made beef-tea and calves'-foot jelly and sent them in with Mrs. Waterlow's kindest regards. Remorse bit at Mamma's heart and made her miserable every time she thought of Albert Godden. He was lying on a water-bed to keep his bones from coming through his skin. Mamma cried when she heard about Albert's bones.

Then the patient rallied. Then he was convalescent. And when the news came that Albert was sitting up in bed, eating a mutton chop, Mamma cried again for joy.

"Poor old Skunk," said Richard, "I wish we hadn't called him that."

"So do I," said Charlotte. (She was eighteen, she had left school, and had her hair up.) "Eating a mutton chop."

Very soon after the mutton chop Mrs. Godden called to thank Mrs. Waterlow for the beef-tea and jelly and things. She told her all about Albert's typhoid. And Mamma called on Mrs. Godden when she knew she was at home, and listened affectionately while Mrs. Godden told the story of Albert's typhoid a second time. And she nearly cried again when she heard that he was nothing but skin and bone.

For if it had been Richard . . .

Her ill-feeling was gone ; she was carried away in the rush of her sympathy with Albert's mother, and before she knew what she was doing she had asked Wilfrid to tea.

And when the first warm kindness had cooled and it became clear that Arnold's people would never be permanently friendly with the Goddens, Wilfrid kept on coming in for tea. Mamma said he was really a very decent little fellow, and the friendship was allowed, provided, she said, it didn't go any further, and Charlotte was not dragged in. She reflected that Charlotte was old enough to look after herself, and was not in the least likely to fall in love with Albert, which was what she dreaded. Richard had always been careful to choose *his* friends well. And he was going to Oxford. At least he had been trying for the last year to pass in.

As for Arnold, "Some day," she said to herself, "when he's grown up and out in the world, it'll die down."

She couldn't believe that it was natural.

Arnold was back in Chelmsed. At fourteen he was in the Upper Fifth, still weak in mathematics but the best classical scholar in his house. He had done with Virgil and Homer and

was reading Horace and Euripides. In a sneaking way the house was proud of him "A terrible swotter," they said, "but jolly decent with it." They even tolerated Wilfrid Godden because of him.

Wilfrid went his way, twinkling good-humouredly when they asked him the price of tea. Arnold's fists were ready for any boy who went further. To say "Foodle" with a peculiar intonation became a punishable offence.

"I wish you'd leave them alone," said Wilfrid. "I'm used to it."

"I won't. They've got to stop it or get used to being licked."

And they stopped it. Wilfrid had peace after Arnold had licked Coxon, the Spitting Devil, for calling Wilfrid a cad.

The fight with Coxon endeared Wilfrid to him more than ever. He couldn't help loving the thing he fought for any more than he could help fighting for the thing he loved. So far from dying down, his friendship for young Godden went on and on into the future; he saw no end to it.

They were sitting together one evening in Wilfrid's study. Wilfrid was in the Sixth. Albert had left Chelmsford and gone in for engineering. They were more to each other without Albert than they had been when he was there.

They talked about the future. Arnold was sure about it. If Richard could go to Oxford, so could he.

"What shall you go in for when you leave?" he said.

"Oh, natural history, physiology, biology, zoölogy, all that sort of thing."

(Wilfrid was studying for the London matric.)

"I shall travel," he went on. "South America, Central Africa, looking up wild animals in their proper places."

"I say, could we go together?"

"Rather. If you cared to."

"That would be gorgeous."

He meant it. He was torn between two ambitions. On the one hand the life of scholarly leisure; a professorship in Oxford for choice, a life of seclusion and perfect peace, uninterrupted satisfaction of his passion for literature. To be one of England's greatest classical scholars, that was his dream. He would write *Introduction to the Greek Tragic Dramatists*, by Arnold Waterlow; something of that sort.

On the other hand there was the life of dangerous adventure, travelling in strange countries, studying wild animals in their

wildness, lions and tigers and—and jaguars he would study, he and Wilfrid Godden together ; going everywhere, from the tropics to the poles, through all the seas of the world, through all the forests, up steaming equatorial rivers, over great continents, through veldt and bush, prairie and desert and jungle he would go. He would climb mountains. They would write a book together, *Wild Animals of the Tropics*, by Godden and Waterlow. Something like that. Godden and Waterlow sounded well.

Each life had an equal fascination. One wouldn't be enough for him. He would have both. He would be a great scholar *and* a great explorer. The combination seemed to him entirely possible, even likely. In his imagination no obstacle presented itself to the double scheme of perfect peace and perfect dangerous adventure. And he would see Rome, too, and Florence and Venice, and Athens. Oh, and Egypt and China. He would go into Asia Minor and stand where Troy had stood. He saw his life unrolling itself through wonderful places in a noble freedom. Nothing compelled him, nothing thwarted him. He would live the life he chose. His father and mother might say he couldn't go to Oxford ; but he would get a scholarship and go. They might say he mustn't travel, but he would travel all the same. He would join an expedition. He and Wilfrid. Nothing could stop him. And it would be gorgeous.

And when Wilfrid reminded him that it would be five years before he could go to Oxford, and that it would probably be ten before he could join an expedition, he said that was a nuisance but there were lots of jolly things to do and the time would pass. You were still young at nineteen ; even at twenty-four you were not really old.

He was saying again how gorgeous it would be when the telegram came.

“ Come at once. Father dying.—RICHARD.”

It was not possible. It couldn't happen.

He had cried a little in the Headmaster's study, because Dr. Binyon had seemed so persuaded that it was happening ; he treated him so like a boy whose father was dying that for a dreadful moment Arnold believed he was that boy. He cried more from vexation and bewilderment than because he was sorry. He couldn't be sorry when he didn't believe it. He wouldn't believe it. It was not possible ; it couldn't happen.

In the train he kept on repeating the telegram to himself : " Come at once. Father dying. Come at once. Father dying."

But he wasn't dying. Richard only thought he was. He couldn't see his father dying. He saw him sitting up at the dinner-table ; he thought of how his eyebrows lifted and his eyes rolled when he said funny things. " Marsupial—the younger marsupial." That was what he had called him. He thought of the stick he had given him two years ago with a silver chain, and how he had hated it ; and he tried to make himself wish he had it now. Father—dying.

The house looked the same as ever ; the blinds were up, the front door stood open. He went in. The sound of men's voices came from the shut drawing-room. He stood in the doorway. Dr. Draper was in there, talking to his partner, Dr. Payne. He heard what he said.

" You know what he was. *He's killed himself.*"

When they saw Arnold they stopped talking. Their eyes shifted. They couldn't look him in the face. They were ashamed because he had heard. They stared at each other with questioning eyebrows as if they said, " He heard. What are you going to do about it ? " Then they pretended that it hadn't happened. They held out their hands and Dr. Draper said, " Well, Arnold—— " And Arnold turned suddenly and went out.

He went down the basement stairs and through the door into the back garden. He walked round and round on the gravelled paths, his mind turned round and round in a tight black circle, thinking one thought. Killed himself. Killed himself. It meant nothing.

The black circle stretched. Killed himself. Like Mr. Baxter. He looked up at the bedroom window. Behind the red damask curtains he had done it like Mr. Baxter. He was there.

But he wasn't dead. The blinds were up, the curtains were drawn back, and the window was open. He thought : " Mother. Mother's up there." He was afraid to go up and find her. He was afraid of her face. He thought it would be different. Yet he longed to see her, he longed to put his arms round her and comfort her.

He went back into the house and found Richard coming up the steps from the front garden. He had been seeing the doctors off. His face was stubborn and angry. He said, " Hullo, so you've come, have you ? "

" Yes. Richard—— "

" What is it ? "

" Let's go in here—— "

The narrow den beside the drawing-room was their study. They went into it.

" What do you want ? " said Richard.

" Is he really dying ? "

He had meant to say, " Did he really kill himself ? " But the words stuck in his throat. Richard's face repulsed him.

" Of course he's dying." Richard turned to go.

" Don't go, Richard."

" What the hell do you want ? "

" I want to know why he's dying."

" Oh—he's got pneumonia. Double pneumonia."

" Then it wasn't true what Dr. Draper said ? "

" What did he say ? "

" Why—that he'd killed himself."

" He told *you* that ? "

" No. He said it to Dr. Payne and I heard. What did he mean ? "

" He didn't mean what you think. He meant—I suppose he meant that he's killed himself with drinking. He *would* do it, you know. It didn't give him a chance."

Arnold was silent. He knew now that his father was dying. He could connect his dying with something tangible that he had known and seen. Only he hadn't known that you could die of it. Richard knew that, and, queerly, through all his stubbornness and anger, he seemed proud of his knowledge. And in his secret, underhand way he judged his father and condemned him.

" Where's mother ? " Arnold said at last.

" Upstairs, with *him*."

" Can I see her ? "

" You can go up."

" Into his room ? "

" Yes. He won't know you're there. He doesn't know anybody."

It was twilight now. The red curtains of the window were drawn, and behind the red curtains of the bed a candle burned. The room was flooded with the horrible red light.

At first Arnold saw nothing but the red light and the heaped white mound under the bed-clothes, and on the white pillow the red blur that was his father's face. The air of the room was thick and warm and foul.

His mother was standing by the window curtain she had just drawn ; when she saw him she gave a little moaning cry—" Arny—" and came to him. She held him in her arms and pressed her face to his, close, close. He felt that she clung to him for comfort. And through his grief and fright there pierced a sudden delicious joy and satisfaction.

" I'm glad you've come. I *wanted* you so, Arny."

" Me ? Me ? "

" You. Richard's so queer. I think he's sorry. But it makes him hard and cruel and I'm afraid to speak to him."

" Oh, mother—" "

She was changed, changed ; she would never have said that if she had not been changed. This was not the grief he knew, the worrying grief that came when they had vexed her, that twisted her small face and disfigured it. It was a strange, intense grief that flamed in her eyes, that burned in fever on her cheeks, that made her lips dry and hot. She was strung up to a pitch, exalted by it.

" He can't help it," she said. " He doesn't mean it."

" No. He doesn't mean it."

" Charlotte's here. She came yesterday. Charlotte's very good to me. She's so sensible."

He could see that even in Charlotte there was something wanting. It was he who comforted her. Not Richard. Not Charlotte.

They were standing together by the bedside. She had her arm still round his neck, holding him to her.

" Won't he get better ? "

" No, Arny, he can't. He's dying now. Listen—" "

A deep groaning, snoring sound came through his father's half-open mouth ; his chest heaved in short, shallow jerks.

" That means death," she said. " He isn't conscious."

She sat on her low seat by the bed, and he stood beside her, watching, listening to the groaning, snoring breath. Twice Charlotte came into the room, looked at her father and went out on tip-toe. But Richard did not come.

The hall clock struck eight. Martha looked in at the door to say that supper was ready. His mother shook her head at Martha.

" You go, Arny."

But Arnold wouldn't go.

The door shut. Martha's feet sounded on the stairs. They waited.

Suddenly the groaning ceased for a moment ; it came again, louder, ceased and came and ceased. Arnold looked at his mother. Her face loosened and broke up in a writhing wave of terror. She cried out.

“ Fetch Richard and Charlotte. He’s going.”

They came, starting up in haste from their supper. But before they could get to him he was gone.

For the first time since their childhood Arnold saw Charlotte cry. She did it quietly, almost complacently, with no shaking or reddening of her demure white face.

Arnold did not cry. His eyes were tied up and strained and prickly, and there was a weight on his chest like an iron band clamped to it tight. His heart swelled up against the band. He thought that it would never loosen, that his heart would never beat properly ; as long as he lived he would never be happy again. Yet he didn’t feel sorry ; he felt weak, as if he had had a long illness. It was worse when he thought of his father and when his mother cried. He sat all day doing nothing ; there was nothing for him to do except put stamps on the letters Richard wrote.

Charlotte was wonderful. She went about with an air of subdued arrogance, composed and competent ; she was busy sewing crape on an old black frock ; her needle flashed in and out with a little click, she pulled the thread through with quick, determined jerks ; stitching appeased her ; but you could see she was sorry.

Richard kept up his stubbornness and anger. He resented his father’s death as if it demanded from him an emotion that he could not feel ; he resented Arnold’s and Charlotte’s and his mother’s grief that rebuked his apathy. He wouldn’t come into the dining-room where they sat together, but shut himself up in the study alone, so that nobody should see he wasn’t sorry. At the same time Richard made himself useful and important. His mother said she didn’t know what she would have done without him. It was he who saw the doctor and the registrar and the undertaker. He made all the arrangements for his father’s funeral, he seemed positively to enjoy making them, and his uncle, William Fisher, who had come up from Liverpool, said they couldn’t have been better.

They buried him in the City of London Cemetery, in a green plot between two cypresses. Only Richard and Arnold followed him, and Uncle William, and the cashier of the firm he had worked for, and Wilfrid Godden.

Mr. Fisher was a round, rosy man, with a habit of jocularity.

He found it difficult to set his face in any expression of sorrow or condolence. He was constantly lapsing into cheerfulness, remembering, and pulling himself up short.

He greeted his sister-in-law with a burst of affection, which he checked abruptly. "Delighted to see you, Emmy, my dear, delighted—— If only it was a happier occasion."

And after the funeral: "Perfect arrangements, Richard. I congratulate you—— Congratulation's hardly the word"; till Emmy became hysterical between grief and laughter.

Mr. Fisher was appointed sole trustee and executor under Mr. Waterlow's will. He stayed on for five days after the funeral, looking into things. The more he looked, the worse they appeared. Joseph Waterlow, for nine years a city clerk, had contrived to go bankrupt a second time. The scale, though small compared with his former achievement, was disastrous. He had borrowed money on his salary, speculated with it and lost it; the three thousand he had had from the sale of the East Ferry house had gone the same way, with a third part of his wife's capital. By these losses and the sudden decrease of her husband's salary, Mrs. Waterlow found her income reduced from six hundred a year to two hundred and fifty. Enough to live on, but not enough to pay for Richard at Oxford or Arnold at Chelmsed.

"No," said Uncle William, "not enough for that." He was serious now.

He had summoned them all into the dining-room; Richard and Charlotte and Arnold, and their mother; they sat round the table solemnly to hear their fate.

"But where's it all gone to?" said Mrs. Waterlow.

"Down gold-mines mostly."

"Well, I'm sure poor Joseph was only trying to make our fortunes."

"That may have been his intention," said Uncle William.

"But, I say, if I don't go to Oxford, where am I to go?"

Every decent father sent his sons to Oxford or Cambridge, and Richard had not conceived it possible that he should not be sent. There was the London University, but that was only fit for awful chaps like the Goddens. He thought his uncle meant that he should go there."

"Go?" said Uncle William. "You'll have to go into an office."

Richard was silent. He had not thought of anything so bad as that.

" Oh—— " said Mrs. Waterlow, in a little cry of horror.

" It's no use taking it like that, Emmy. He's got to do something. So, for the matter of that, has Arnold."

" Arnold ? What can he do ? "

" He can do what other boys do. He can go into an office, too."

" At fourteen ? "

" Younger boys than he have gone. Have you anything to say, Arnold ? "

His tone implied that it wouldn't matter what he said.

He said loudly and firmly, " If I've got to go I'll go."

" I'm sorry, my boy, but I'm afraid you've got to, for your mother's sake. I daresay she could manage without your help by scraping and pinching herself, but you don't want her to pinch and scrape."

" Of course I don't," said Arnold.

Then Charlotte spoke. Her voice was clear and cool. " Can't I do something ? "

" What could you do ? "

" I could be a teacher."

" You haven't got a degree," said Richard.

" If I could have stayed another year at Cheltenham—— "

" There's no money, dear, for Cheltenham," said her mother.

Uncle William was silent a long time ; he seemed to be meditating. At last he said, " I think your aunt would like to do something for Charlotte. If we paid for a year's schooling, would you take up teaching seriously ? "

" Of course I would. I *am* serious," said Charlotte. She added, " It's awfully good of you."

" And the boys," said their mother, " who'll take them ? "

Uncle William had settled all that yesterday. He had a friend in the City. Harcourt and Harcourt, stockbrokers, would take Richard on as a clerk, to oblige Uncle William, without a premium.

It had been more difficult to find a place for Arnold. But there was a firm, a big firm in Bishopsgate Street, that had promised to try him. He was to see their manager to-morrow. " Soper and Horne," said Uncle William with an air of false assurance.

" What *are* Soper and Horne ? " said Arnold.

His uncle hesitated for one instant. Then, smiling as if he saw a good joke somewhere, he replied : " Cheese factors. Wholesale cheesemongers."

And again Arnold's mother gave her piteous cry.

"How revolting!" said Richard.

"It's not exactly what we'd choose," said Uncle William, "but we can't be choosers."

"I suppose we're beggars," said Mrs. Waterlow bitterly.

"Oh no. Not quite that."

"What does Arnold know about cheeses?"

"He'll learn. He's a clever boy. He'll learn. He'll begin at the beginning and work his way upwards."

Upwards? Arnold wondered, to what heights?

He didn't attempt to fight against this fate that had come on him. It had simply come. If his not going to Soper and Horne's meant that his mother would have to pinch and scrape, he was even glad to go.

There was a satisfactory interview with the manager next day, and Arnold was engaged as office boy with a salary of ten shillings a week.

The following Monday he joined the black-coated procession that emerged from the avenue to hurry down the Cranbrook Road, catching the eight-fifteen train to Liverpool Street.

His boyhood was over. He was going into the City, to earn his own living, like a man, at fourteen.

XXII

As he walked to the station, keeping up with the procession by long, masterful strides, a feeling of immense importance and competence uplifted him. If he was not exactly proud of being a wholesale cheesemonger's office boy, he was proud of himself for being it. Gorgeous it was to think that he was capable of earning his own living, like Richard and like Mr. Godden.

As he sat in the train he kept on doing sums in his head. Ten shillings a week was twenty-six pounds a year, and he had found out that twenty-six pounds a year was the amount of his keep. If he paid his mother five shillings a week for his breakfast and dinner and kept three shillings a week for his lunch at sixpence a day, there would be two shillings a week left over, which was exactly five pounds four shillings a year, and that, he reckoned, would about pay for his clothes. He had forgotten his laundry. There would have been three shillings a week to come off for his fare, but Uncle William had given him a season ticket and would continue that benefaction till he got his rise. The possession of a season ticket heightened his sense of importance. He enjoyed taking it out, and showing it to the ticket-collector before the other passengers. It was the symbol of his manhood. Everybody who saw that ticket would know that he was travelling on business in the City.

But such a business—— Selling cheeses. Not cheeses in some distant place that you sold in your head, purified by distance, but cheeses stacked in rows all round you. (He had been aware of them when he went to see the manager.) Cheeses that smelt. He had an awful fear that by living a long time among cheeses his whole person would come to smell of cheese. Last night Richard had called him a cheesemonger. He had said that Uncle William hated them because their father was a gentleman and he wasn't, and because they were better educated than he had been, and he took a fiendish pleasure in making Arnold a cheesemonger. "He'd like," said Richard, "to get us all down to his own beastly level."

Arnold didn't think Uncle William was so bad as that. People weren't. He had been awfully decent to Charlotte ; and there was the season ticket. Anyhow, he wasn't going to be a cheesemonger. He was going to be first an office boy, then a clerk. It would be awful to be Soper or Horne, actually mongering cheeses, but a clerkship was a very different thing. And whatever else he was he would be himself, Arnold Waterlow. To-day at Soper and Horne's he would be what he was yesterday. Neither Soper nor Horne could take his mind away from him.

He couldn't think what their minds were like ; Mr. Godden was a tea-merchant and he had a wonderful mind ; tea hadn't made any difference to it ; but even if Soper and Horne had beastly minds, they couldn't change his or make it like their own. His mother had said last night, " It doesn't matter what you *do*, you'll always *be* yourself." But somehow he felt she hadn't meant it ; she had minded so awfully what he did. She had cried when she saw him going off to the City, and had said, " Poor Arny ! " But he wasn't going to be poor Arny and whine about it. Only, when he thought of his mother, last night seemed like the last night of a happy life that had ended to-day for ever.

And as he entered his pen, the pen of the inferior clerks on the ground floor, he had more than ever this sense of the end. The pen was partitioned off from the warehouse by a screen of honey-coloured wood and white ground glass with black letters on it : ENQUIRY OFFICE. An inner door at the side, marked PRIVATE, led from it into the Manager's office, and at the back of it was the counting house with the senior clerks sitting high at their desks, behind a brass rail. Round it were the great spaces of the warehouse where the air was a clear dust-coloured gloom. Over the top of the screen you could see the last shelves of the cheeses, round, corpulent cheeses, in rows. The air was full of smells. He could distinguish two : a wet, soapy smell that stopped your nostrils, and a pungent, powdery, corrupt smell that tickled them.

There were two young clerks in the outer pen, seated at very high desks on very high stools. The smell of the cheeses, so far from being shut out by the partition, filled the pen. But the clerks didn't seem to mind it ; they sat calmly writing. As he came in the two looked at him, and looked at each other and grinned. One said, " The public school-boy." He was a white-faced, black-haired youth with protruding lips and a retreating chin and an enormous Jewish nose. The other said something

that sounded like "Ker-ke-hem!" and Arnold was conscious that he had swaggered.

"I think I'm the new office boy," he said.

"You *think*. Ain't you certain?" The boy who had said "Ker-ke-hem" answered. He had sandy hair, red ears that stuck out like handles, a pink, spotty face, round, surprised-looking eyes and a wide mouth that grinned.

"I'm not certain where I'm to go to."

"You can go to blazes," said the Jew boy.

The red-eared one pointed with his pen to a stool by the door with a small table beside it. On the table was a pile of addressed envelopes and a wet sponge in a saucer.

"You sit there, Young Eton," he said, "and don't you speak till you're spoken to."

He grinned so merrily that you couldn't hate him; and he had winked one surprised eye at Arnold to show that he didn't mean it.

Arnold sat down.

The door of the inner pen opened and the manager came in. He was a middle-aged man with a mild, apostolic face, black haired and black bearded, and he had dark, mournful eyes; eyes that brooded. Arnold liked his eyes.

He was Mr. Bradley.

"Waterlow?" he said, and his voice was mournful.

"Yes, sir." (He had been told that he must say "sir" to the manager.)

"You go in there."

Arnold went before him into the inner pen. The manager sat down. Arnold remained standing. It felt rather like an interview with the Headmaster.

"I understand," said Mr. Bradley, "that you've been to a public school. Is that so?"

"Yes. I was at Chelmsford."

"I suppose, now, you know Latin and Greek and mathematics and so forth?"

"I'm not very good at mathematics, but I know Latin and Greek fairly well."

"Well," said the manager, "forget it."

His voice from being mournful had grown peevish. "Your Latin and Greek and all that won't be any good to you here."

"I didn't think they would be, sir."

"Well, you've got to forget 'em. You've got to forget you ever were at a public school. We can't have any of your

public-school ways here. You don't suppose those boys in there have had a public school education, do you ? "

" No, sir ; I don't."

" Well, they can do what *we* want. They've risen from office boys to be junior clerks, both of 'em," said Mr. Bradley.

" Really ? " said Arnold.

" You see wot I mean ? If you work well as an office boy, you may rise to their position. If you don't, you'll not be kept on. Not another week you won't."

" What shall I have to do ? " said Arnold.

" Peters will show you."

Mr. Bradley rose, he opened the inner door. " Here, Peters, you take this boy Waterlow and show him the ropes. He doesn't know anything."

Arnold was alone with Peters and the Jew boy.

" He always says that. What *do* you know ? " said Peters.

" He's quite right. I don't know anything."

" Do you know how to stamp envelopes ? "

" Yes. I should think I knew *that*."

" Let's see you do it."

He produced a sheet of stamps and pointed to the pile of envelopes on Arnold's table. Arnold began pulling down the pile and tearing the stamps off, one by one, licking and fixing them and thumping them down with his fist.

" I thought so," said Peters. " That's not the way to do it. There isn't time to spit on every bloody stamp."

He came forward and built the envelopes into a pile again, on the edge of the table ; he tore off a long single strip of stamps, passed it lightly over the sponge, and with an inconceivably swift movement placed each stamp and nipped it off against the edge of an envelope till the strip had travelled through the pile.

" That's the way you do it," said Peters. " Slick ! Now *you* try."

Arnold tried ; and, though his attempt at slickness was, as Peters said, pretty feeble, still Peters owned very handsomely that he had caught the knack.

" All you've got to do is to work up to top-speed. And now," said Peters, " what else can you do ? Can you open a door for a customer ? "

" I should say so."

" See you do it."

Arnold opened the outer door a little way.

"That's no good," said Peters. "If he was a fat 'un he'd never get in. You must open it as if he was a coach and horses. And you jump up, sharp and smart, as if he was your long-lost uncle. Don't glare at 'im as if you wanted 'is lungs and liver."

"What next?" said Arnold, when he had practised at the door with Peters playing the part of the customer.

Peters scratched his head. "Next? There ain't much more next. You may have to show him up to one of the top bosses. That's on the first floor. What you've got to do is to nip up in front of him quick and eager-like, so as to get there before he's on the landing. Then you wait for him respectful."

"I see. I can go fast enough if that's all."

"It isn't all. You'll have to pull that mug of yours into an expression of respect. As you is, you're much too cocky looking. Well—do you know when the manager isn't in when he is?"

"No. How can you tell?"

"You can't tell—Eton. You knock at his door and say, 'Please, sir, are you disengaged?' as if you thought he'd bite your face off."

"It doesn't sound very difficult. Shall I finish these envelopes?"

"You'd better," said Peters. "And finish 'em quick."

Arnold set to work. As fast as he finished one pile Peters and Nathan (the Jew boy) had another ready for him. And then the first-floor bell rang and he had to dash upstairs and bring down more and more envelopes from Mr. Soper's and Mr. Horne's rooms. And people kept on calling, and he had to jump up and show them into the manager's office, or take them to Mr. Soper or Mr. Horne.

He had seen Soper and Horne. Soper was a clean-shaven, pink and benevolent old gentleman with a bald head; Horne was in the early thirties, upright and handsome, with sleek, bay-coloured hair and a military moustache. Horne, Peters informed him, was a captain in the Middlesex Rifle Volunteers. "You should see 'im when 'e's in his uniform. Swagger isn't the word; he might be God Almighty."

Neither Soper nor Horne seemed to regard Arnold's presence as anything new or extraordinary. They called him "Boy" and otherwise treated him as if he had been there ever since Soper and Horne's was founded.

Arnold had been afraid that he would grow horribly flabby with sitting in his office. But no; it was a continual jumping

off his stool and darting to the door, and rushing up and down stairs, and running errands in the City. He took a sort of amusement in going faster than any other boy could possibly have gone ; and though he did this for his pleasure, he created such an illusion of alert devotion that at the end of the day Mr. Bradley expressed his satisfaction.

" If you can keep it up, my boy," he said, " you'll do."

And at stamping, too, his speed had increased considerably. If only the cheeses hadn't smelt so.

" Do they always smell ? " he asked Peters.

" Always," Peters said. " You can't take the smell away from a cheese. You can't kill it. When those cheeses are gone, and you and I are dead, and old Bradley, and Horne and Soper, that smell will be here. And Lord, when it's hotter—— But you won't go on noticing it. You'll get into such a state as you won't know whether it's the cheeses or your own nose."

At home that evening his mother asked him how he had got on. He told her.

" You didn't mind it ? "

" Not so frightfully."

" It's worse for Richard," she said. " He was to have gone to Oxford."

" Wasn't I ? "

" Well—I'm not sure."

" I could have got a scholarship."

She looked at him reproachfully as if he had said, " And Richard couldn't."

" You don't know," she said. " Richard doesn't like stock-broking any more than you like cheeses."

" I wouldn't mind them if they didn't stink so. Stocks and shares don't smell."

He envied Richard his association with stocks and shares. Stocks and shares were not tangible ; they did no violence to your senses ; in contrast to his cheeses he thought of them as mathematical entities, moving in the purest regions of the mind ; you trafficked with them, cleanly, in your head, and he gathered that there was about them a delightful element of risk.

And again his mother said, " Poor Army ! " And she was angry with Richard when he called him Signor Gorgonzola and the Vicomte de Camembert. Angry ; but a little smile flickered about her mouth ; you could see she thought that Richard had been funny.

The Jew boy watched him. His black, shining eyes were secret and cunning.

Arnold sat in an eating-house off Bishopsgate Street, and dined. Peters had told him where to go. The low room was full of steam from the hot dishes, a film of steam covered the grey marble of his table, steam muffed the window-panes and the glass of the sham mahogany screens. There was a smell of boiled beef and carrots and of the rancid suet of plum-duff. At Plank's eating-house you could fill yourself with solid, nourishing food for sixpence.

He had been a week at Soper and Horne's.

The Jew boy, Nathan, who was called Noses, because, Peters said, his nose was big enough for two, Nathan had found him in his screened compartment. He sat at Arnold's table. He was there before Arnold had time to hide the little Oxford *Æschylus* he had brought with him to read at his dinner-hour and in the train.

Nathan's eyes swooped on the strange text. "Let's have a look," he said.

He had a look.

"What do you call *that*?"

"It's Greek," said Arnold.

"Oh, Lord! Can you read it?"

"Yes."

"What good'll it do you?"

"It depends on what you call good."

"You know wot I mean."

"I don't."

"Well—wot use is it? Will it fry potatoes?"

"No. It won't."

"Tell you wot, Young Eton, if you're caught reading that muck in office hours, you'll get the sack."

"I don't read it in office hours."

"You don't want me to let on?"

"I don't care what you do," said Arnold, and turned again to his *Prometheus*.

Nathan had bolted his portions of meat and pudding with quick snaps like a dog, but instead of going he waited till Arnold had finished his. He had ordered a glass of beer and swilled it in two draughts. His large, gross lips shone, wet with beer. Arnold wished he would go. But Nathan waited. When he heard Arnold call for his bill he began fumbling in his pockets. His face assumed an admirable expression of surprise.

"That's jolly awkward," he said. "Haven't got a ha'penny on me." He watched while Arnold took out half a crown and received his change. "I say, Eton, can you lend me a bob?" Arnold lent it.

"Pay you back to-morrow, honour bright."

"That's all right," said Arnold. He meant that he trusted Nathan.

To-morrow and the next day Nathan turned up again at Arnold's table. But so far from paying him back, he borrowed each time another shilling. He said if Arnold didn't lend it him he'd have to go without his dinner. Arnold couldn't bear the thought of Noses going without his dinner. It positively pleased him to see Noses tucking into sausage and mashed potatoes at his expense.

The third time this happened he saw Peters at the opposite table, looking on. Peters waited and walked back with him to Bishopsgate Street.

"I say, young 'un," he said, "you didn't lend Noses anything, did you?"

"I did. I had to, or he wouldn't have got any dinner."

"Rats! That's just his game. It's a trick, a dirty Sheeny's trick, that's wot it is. He tries it on anybody new. How much has he had off you?"

"Three bob."

"Lord! You'll never see that three bob again. Don't you go lending him any more now."

"But if he hasn't got it?"

"He's got it all right. He's got three times a bigger screw than wot you have. Don't you go lending him no more. Look here, next time, you dine at my table, see! He daren't do it if I'm there."

So Peters and not Prometheus became the companion of his dinner-hour. Impossible to bring out Prometheus with Peters looking on. He had a peculiar feeling about Peters. Peters had been decent to him and he couldn't bear that he should feel his social inferiority. It would be awful to show off or swagger before Peters, or to remind him that he was educated when Peters wasn't. He would have liked Peters to know how he had licked Coxon and stood up to the terrible Snooker, but he couldn't talk to him about his school. There was nothing you could talk to him about except football and racing. But you could at least listen politely while Peters talked.

If his mother could have heard him, if she could have heard

him swear—— She, who had objected to the Goddens, if she could have seen Peters, if she knew that her son was hail-fellow-well-met with him !

The acquaintance was about a fortnight old when she asked him if he had made any friends at the office.

“ There’s a chap,” he said, “ called Peters.”

“ Peters. Is Peters a nice boy ? ”

“ Awfully decent.”

“ Yes, but you think everybody’s decent. Is he—is he a gentleman ? ”

And Arnold lied. For Peter’s sake and his mother’s sake he lied.

“ Yes,” he said, “ of course he is.”

“ Then,” said his mother, “ wouldn’t you like to bring him in some evening ? ”

He hadn’t been prepared for that. “ I might ask him,” he said, “ but I don’t believe he’d come. He’s rather a big swell.”

And his mother went away, happy, with the idea of a superior, well-born Peters who was too big a swell to come.

He could get through his work if he looked on it as a game, trying to see how fast he could play it, how many envelopes he could stamp to the minute. When he had worked up to a top-speed higher than Peters or Nathan had attained there was nothing left to try for. The game had become monotonous, mechanical. But by its very nature it left his mind free. His body sat on a stool, stamping envelopes with incredible speed ; his mind wandered through the golden doors into the good place where it desired to be. Long passages from the Iliad and the Odyssey, from Æschylus, from Keats and Shelley, streamed through it ; he had learned them by heart so that they might be with him for ever.

“ Oh, wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn’s being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,
Yellow and black and pale and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes. . . .

Oh ! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud !
I fall upon the thorns of life ! I bleed !

A heavy weight of years has tamed and bowed
One too like thee : tameless, and swift, and proud.”

"What are you grinning at, Young Eton?"

He was grinning at the absurdity of sitting on an office stool, surrounded by cheeses, and saying odes to himself. The west wind and the smell of Soper and Horne's cheeses——

Two years passed. He was sixteen.

Then, suddenly, he was promoted. Last year his salary had been raised to twelve and six; now it was fifteen shillings. He paid his own fare and had four shillings a week over instead of two. But he had to address envelopes as well as stamp them. One day Mr. Bradley called him into the inner pen. He said, "Write down the name and address of the firm on that envelope." He wrote it. His handwriting was beautiful, like Greek type.

Mr. Bradley looked at it. His face became peevish. With an unclean forefinger he pointed.

"What's that meant for?"

"It's an 'e,'" said Arnold.

"It isn't *like* an 'e.'"

"It's a Greek 'e,' sir."

"A Greek 'e'? Isn't an English 'e' good enough for you? Can you make an 'e' like that?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Then make 'em like that. You'll never write a good commercial hand, but I must say you write clear—— Very clear."

Piles of envelopes went out from Soper and Horne's addressed in Arnold's strangely mature, distinguished hand. And he had to take down orders from customers.

This promotion was disastrous to the inner life. His mind was no longer free. He had to pin it down to what he was doing; he had to take care that he got the orders right and didn't make Greek "e's" instead of English ones. He couldn't say poems to himself any more. In summer, even when the office day was done, his time for reading was limited. He went for long walks in the evenings; he strolled with his mother through the fields or worked for her in the garden. He played cricket on Saturday afternoons. Sometimes he mounted Albert Godden's tall giraffe-like bicycle and rode off with Wilfrid for miles into the country. He could only keep himself fit by playing games, walking and cycling. His mother required that he should go to church with her once every Sunday. He went. It would have hurt her horribly if he had refused.

He made a point of reading at least a hundred lines of Greek or Latin in bed at night, and before he got up in the morning ; He was haunted by the fear of forgetting, the closing of the golden door. As far as he could see his future he would have to go through that process of getting on which meant final absorption in Soper and Horne's. Each year the business would put out more and more feelers to draw him in. He would be an invoice clerk some day, then a ledger clerk then, probably, a cashier.

One evening he spoke about it to Mr. Godden.

" The fact is I'm in an awful funk."

" What are you afraid of ? "

" Of forgetting, losing everything. I'm afraid the beastly business may do something to me. Will it ? "

" Not if you don't let it."

" How can I stop it ? "

" By hating it. By resisting it. Don't let it get a hold on you. Don't think of it out of office hours. Hate it. Forget it."

" I do hate it."

" Go on hating it. Hate everything that comes between you and the things you care for. The beautiful things. Keep the golden door open."

" Do you hate *your* business ? "

" I loathe it, Arnold. I've had to stick to it because of my mother first, then because of my wife and children. I've made a success of it and I try not to think about my success. I keep my mind clean."

" Do you think *I* can ? "

" I know you can. This isn't orthodox advice I'm giving you. It isn't the way to avoid suffering. You'll be bound to suffer. But, Arnold, if you didn't, that would mean the thing had got you, body and soul."

He meditated.

" It's a thousand pities. With your brains you might have done anything, anything. You see, I haven't made my boys go into the business. You ought never to have been made."

Arnold felt the implied reproach. " Mother couldn't help it," he said. He had always believed that his mother couldn't help it, that nothing could have been done to save him.

It was Winifred who enlightened him.

He was walking with Winifred and Wilfrid that evening when he told them of his dreadful promotion.

" What does it mean ? " she said.

"It means that you can't get away from it one single minute. You've got to be thinking of some beastly thing the whole blessed time."

"It was a shame, Arnold, to let you go there."

"What could I do?"

"You could have stayed at Chelmsted and got your scholarship."

"How could I? We're so beastly poor."

"Beastly poor, when you live in that house? Do you know what father says?"

"What does he say?"

"Why, that you could have stayed on for years if your mother had chosen."

"She couldn't choose, Winny."

"She could, perfectly well. Why did she go on living in that house? If she'd gone into a little house and kept one servant she could have paid for you at Chelmsted. Fancy caring like that about a *house*!"

Arnold was hot and angry. For a moment he hated Winny. "I wouldn't have let her go into a little house, and keep one servant, and do half the work. How could I?"

"That's what *my* mother would have done. She'd have worked her fingers to the bone before she'd let it happen to Wilfrid or Albert."

"Shut up, Winny!" Wilfrid said. "Can't you see he doesn't like it?"

Winny tossed her head. "It's true, whether he likes it or not."

He supposed it was true. His mother could have done all that. She could have saved him if she had chosen. And she didn't choose. He wouldn't have let her do it; but he couldn't help wishing that she had thought of it, that she had wanted to save him. He couldn't bear to think of Mrs. Godden showing a devotion that his mother had not shown; he couldn't bear that the Goddens should judge her. But no, no, he wouldn't have let her do it. To think of *his* mother working her darling fingers to the bone for him! He would have been a cur if he had let her.

"You've no business to talk like that," he said.

The walk was spoiled for him. He couldn't see the beauty of the willows standing round Vinings lake. As they went home along the Cranbrook road there was a sunset over Wanstead Flats. He wouldn't look at it. He said good-bye at the Goddens' gate. He wouldn't go in for supper.

He had turned into the avenue when he heard Winifred running after him. She came up with him at the garden door.

"Arnold," she said, "I'm sorry I said that about your mother."

"It doesn't matter, Winny. You mustn't think it, that's all."

"I suppose," she said, "you'll hate me for it."

He didn't answer.

"You see, I care so awfully what happens to you."

"Really?" he said. He didn't care about her caring.

"Don't think anything more about it. I shan't."

She persisted. "You've forgiven me?"

"Oh dear me, yes."

Her eyes reddened. Her mouth quivered.

"Don't go and cry about it."

"I'm not crying," she said violently, and left him.

XXIII

HE didn't go in all at once. He walked up and down, up and down under the lime-trees of the avenue till twilight fell from their broad fans and the path darkened.

He found his mother working in the garden, groping among the beds in the last of the light. She looked up at him with her sweet, innocent face, and his heart swelled with love of her. She was dearer to him than ever now that he knew how they had judged her.

"I thought you were going in to supper with those Goddens?" she said.

"I'm not."

"Didn't they ask you?"

"Yes. But I don't want to go."

She smiled, pleased to think he wasn't going.

"You oughtn't to work so late," he said. "It's bad for our dear little eyes."

"I can feel, I don't need to see."

She went on obstinately, tugging at the weeds with her small, passionate hands.

The tall, yellowish brick and white stucco house looked down at them with its three rows of windows, the basement panes blinking upwards from their areas. He had lived in it for nine years without criticising it, taking it and its ugliness for granted. He thought of it now for the first time as a thing with power, controlling destiny, a thing that swallowed up money and left their lives poorer. Winny had said, "Fancy caring like that for a *house*." He wondered how much money it cost them; he wondered whether his mother really did care for it, enough to make it worth while paying.

"Mother, do you like this place?" he asked suddenly.

"Do you mean the house?"

"The house and the garden."

"I like the house as well as I should like any house in Ilford. And I love the garden."

"Do you—really?"

"Yes. I suppose it's because I made it all myself. It was nothing of a garden when we came, and look at it now."

He looked at it. Its borders were gay with asters, chrysanthemums and dahlias, standing close in a rich disorder.

"Think of your making all that with your little hands."

She had made it. She loved it. She would have hated to leave it.

"You're happy here?" he said. If she was happy, if only she was happy, nothing mattered.

"What an odd question. I'm as happy as I can be anywhere. Run away and tell Martha you'll be in for supper."

From the drawing-room window Charlotte called to them to come in.

Richard and Charlotte were together in the drawing-room. Richard lay on the sofa with his knees crossed and one foot in the air. On the floor beside him, sprawling open, was the book he had tried to read and tired of. At twenty-one he had lost a little of his slender beauty. He looked over-ripe, over-heated.

Charlotte was folding the linen sheet she had been mending. Charlotte at twenty was tall and well-developed. She dressed plainly and her pale gold hair was coiled in tight, shining plaits at the back of her head. This, she seemed to say, is the right way to dress, the right way to do your hair, all other ways are vulgar and they are wrong. She did everything with a sedate precision, her old air of superior efficiency. She was thoroughly self-satisfied, politely and exquisitely arrogant. Ever since she had taken her degree and joined the staff of her girls' college at Cheltenham she had treated her younger brother with a certain condescension, as if she said, You are entirely insignificant, you will never be anything but a cheese-factor's clerk; but because I am kind and good I take notice of you. Charlotte was very nice to her mother, but she had made her afraid of her, afraid of her cleverness and competence.

"Enter the Vicomte de Camembert," said Richard in his lazy, drawling voice. "I say, Charley, isn't it about time for supper?"

"Almost. If you're going to wash you'd better go."

But Richard didn't go. He was much too lazy.

It struck Arnold that Charlotte knew what he wanted to know.

"Charley," he said, "do you know what the rent of this house is?"

"Sixty. Why?"

"Oh, I don't know. What's Catherine's wages?"

"Fifteen."

"What does it cost to feed her?"

"About ten shillings a week."

He made a rapid calculation. The rent of a smaller house, say, twenty; the difference, forty. Catherine another forty. Eighty.

"Do you know what the Chelmsted fees come to?"

"No, I don't," said Charlotte.

"Wouldn't be less than a hundred and twenty," Richard said. "What are you driving at?"

"I wanted to know, that's all."

"I know what he's driving at," said Charlotte coldly. "I suppose he means that if we'd gone into a smaller house and kept one servant he could have stayed at Chelmsted."

"I wanted to know whether it was possible. Winifred Godden said it was."

He wanted to know that it was impossible, so that his mother should be beyond reproach. And it was impossible; it would have been no use; the utmost they could have saved would have been forty pounds short.

"The young bitch!" said Richard.

"Richard!" Charlotte reproved him.

"Well, but, what damned cheek! I hope you told her so."

"I did more or less," said Arnold.

"If it had been possible mother would have done it," Charlotte said.

"I'm not so sure," said Richard.

"She'd have done it for *you*, Richard."

"I wouldn't have let her do it for me," said Arnold.

At that moment their mother came into the room.

"Listen to this, mother——" Arnold made signs to him to be quiet, but Richard was merciless; he didn't care how he hurt her provided he could score off the Goddens and put you in the wrong.

"Those wretched Goddens have been telling him he could have stayed at Chelmsted if you'd sacked Catherine and gone into a smaller house."

"I'll thank the Goddens to mind their own business. I suppose Arnold thinks that's what I ought to have done."

"I don't," said Arnold passionately. "I wouldn't——"

But his mother was off, seeing all the disastrous consequences of the removal.

"What should I have done in a smaller house? We wouldn't have had room to turn round. We should never have got out of the draught between the door and window. We should have caught our deaths of cold. The drains would always have been going wrong and there'd have been no butler's pantry. The whole place would have smelt of the kitchen sink. And the gas-pipes would have been sure to leak. And people's washing hanging out in the next garden. I'm sure these rooms are poky enough. Where should I have put my furniture? And it wouldn't have been fair to Martha to give her all the work."

"It would have meant mother doing half of it," said Charlotte.

"I shouldn't be afraid of that. I work hard enough as it is, making ends meet. I've saved a gardener all these years, except for the kitchen garden."

"Mother, darling——"

"You needn't 'mother darling' me. I never *could* have saved enough for Chelmsed. And if I could, it wouldn't have done *you* any good. It would have had to go for Charlotte at Cheltenham. But your uncle wouldn't have let me move. Your poor father wouldn't have let me. I don't know how you could think of such a thing, Arnold."

"I didn't. I didn't want you to. I wouldn't have let you. I wouldn't have gone to Chelmsed. I swear I never thought of it."

"You discussed it with your friends. You let them talk about me."

"I didn't. I told Winifred she'd no business——"

"That's all very well. You must have been saying something. Were you complaining to the Goddens?"

"No. I wasn't complaining. I said I hated the office, that was all."

"I call that complaining. And I don't see why you should, Arnold. Richard doesn't complain."

The supper-bell cut it short.

Richard didn't complain—at least, not about his business. Richard liked his business. He was clever at it. He liked the process of getting on; he looked forward to being a stockbroker some day with a business of his own. He was earning three pounds a week now.

What Richard complained of was the life they led at home. The absolutely rotten life ; the long, dull evenings with Arnold and his mother, and Charlotte in the holidays ; Charlotte with that face of hers, so damnably stiff and proper ; Charlotte always knowing better than you, always trying to teach you something ; couldn't forget she was a teacher in a college. And Arnold with his nose in a book the whole blessed time. And his mother's conversation. Richard couldn't stand it.

Most of all he hated the long winter evenings when his mother *would* make Arnold read aloud to them, not because she wanted to be read aloud to, but because she wanted to keep Arnold from going to the Goddens and because she wanted to think they were having a happy family life together, like the Goddens. He hated the sound of his brother's voice reading on and on. Shakespeare and Dickens and Jane Austen and George Eliot. How Richard hated it ! It didn't occur to him that Arnold hated it too, and wanted to be reading to himself all the time. It was all very well for Arnold. He could get excited all by himself over Keats and Shelley, or any of those fellows. Richard could only get excited in company, in the billiard-room of the Angel and one or two places that he knew of in town.

For the last two years Richard had begun to spend most of his evenings at the Angel, playing billiards, and drinking more than was good for him ; and sometimes he never came back from town at all. He said young Gibson at the office had asked him out to his place. Sometimes he brought young Gibson home with him to stay for the week-end. They sat together alone in the dining-room, drinking beer and whisky and soda. Richard said he wasn't going to let Gibson be bored with his family. It was bad enough for him to have to be polite to them at meals.

Arnold detested Gibson. He had a way of looking at Richard as if they had some frightfully funny, secret joke together that his mother couldn't see, as if her not seeing made it more than ever amusing. Sometimes the mysterious jest would overcome them and they would burst out laughing ; and when Mrs. Waterlow wanted to know what it was all about and wouldn't Mr. Gibson tell them, Mr. Gibson said he couldn't ; he always forgot the point of a joke. And Richard roared again.

There was something mysterious about Richard beside his sense of humour. Out of his three pounds a week he was supposed to pay ten shillings towards the housekeeping. But Richard hardly ever paid it. "You can enter it against me," he

said. And ten shillings entered repeatedly against Richard came to a sum so large that his mother hadn't the heart to ask him for it.

"What do you think he does with it, Arnold?"

"I don't know, mother," said Arnold. But he knew.

He knew when Richard had been drinking at the Angel. He knew that when he stayed out all night he wasn't always at the Gibsons. He had told him that he knew. Richard's eyes had the secret, furtive look they had had at Chelmssted.

"Don't let on to the mater."

"Of course I won't," said Arnold.

And he never did. It would have made her too unhappy. She still believed, innocently, in Richard's innocence.

A year passed. Arnold was seventeen.

It was a Sunday evening early in July. The lime-trees in the avenue were hung with small honey-gold flowers. The air was heavy with the thick honey-sweet smell of the lime-flowers. Arnold sat on the garden wall with his legs dangling into the avenue.

The young girl stood below; she looked up into his face and smiled. She was very beautiful. Her face was a full oval, silk-skinned, coloured a delicate bluish pink like a monthly rose. She had blue eyes very large and open, golden brown eyebrows smooth and fine as feathers, and a great knot of shining gold hair at the nape of her neck. Her mouth had curled-back lips pushed out for kissing, like a child's. She wore a frock of blue and white striped muslin, drawn into her waist with little puckers and bound with a blue ribbon belt.

She had come out of the Larkins' house. She was always coming out when she saw Arnold in the avenue. She would stand at the gate and watch for him. In three weeks they had become intensely conscious of each other's existence. This was their fifth meeting with conversation. It had begun a fortnight ago when he had followed her round the last garden wall into the cornfield and found her sitting on the stile where the field-path slanted to the station road. He took the field path to give himself a pretext.

"I'm sorry," he said as she slid from the stile to let him pass.

She said, "It doesn't matter."

She was there when he came back and it happened all over again. Only this time he vaulted the stile, for sheer light-heartedness and to show how well he could do it.

"Can you jump it?" she said surprisedly.

"Rather."

"Let's see you."

He let her see.

"You cleared it a good four inches," she said.

"That's nothing."

"Do you often come this way?"

"Fairly often."

"You live in the avenue, don't you?"

"Yes."

"I thought I'd seen you. I'm Eva Baxter. Mrs. Larkin's niece. We used to live next door but one to you. You won't remember."

He did remember. The Baxters had left soon after Mr. Baxter's suicide.

"I do, perfectly. You used to play hide-and-seek among the gooseberry-bushes."

"Fancy your remembering! I know your name. You're Arnold Waterlow."

"Fancy your knowing!"

It seemed wonderful to him that she should know his name. Wonderful that she should be Eva Baxter. He didn't think it odd that she should talk to him; it seemed an inevitable, foreseen thing. It was one of those things that happen because they ought to happen.

And last Sunday evening he had seen her walking in the cornfield by herself. He overtook her and they went down the narrow path together and turned at the top towards Vinings lake. They went together side by side under the willows. They found the Manistys' punt moored to the bank. They got in and he punted her over the lake. On the farther shore he saw two people walking. They stopped and watched him as he punted, and he thought that they looked like Mr. and Mrs. Godden. But he didn't care who saw him; he was much too happy. After that, they felt as if they had known each other a long time. "Who'd have thought," she said, "that we were strangers last week?" She said it with a slight cockney accent, but he was too far gone to mind. He knew that this was love.

When he went in next door to borrow a book, Mr. Godden had spoken to him.

"I wish you wouldn't go about with that Baxter girl. She won't do you any good."

Arnold was silent with the shock of it. But he didn't care.

"She's not a nice girl," said Mr. Godden.

"That isn't true. You've only got to look at her."

"You've only got to look at her to see she's a naughty little minx."

"You don't know her, sir."

"I know her better than you do, my dear boy."

"I don't believe you've ever spoken to her."

"She hasn't spoken to me. I'm not young enough."

"I don't know what you mean." He was very much annoyed with Mr. Godden.

"Come, did you begin it, or did she?"

"I did, of course."

Yes, it was he who had spoken first when he saw her sitting on the stile.

"After she'd made you."

"She didn't. It made itself."

"And so it isn't a bit of good my asking you to give it up?"

"Not a bit, sir."

"Well, well, I suppose you must go through the experience. Only don't deceive yourself. The feeling you have for that little girl isn't love, Arnold."

"What do you think it is?"

"Physical excitement. Or pure imagination. Or both. When you're really in love you'll know the difference. But it'll take more than Eva Baxter——"

He had stopped, for Winifred had come into the room. As Arnold rose she had stiffened, stared at him with a sharp, frightened face, turned from him without a word and left the room.

"What have I done?" he said.

"Not much. But enough for Winny."

"I don't see what it's got to do with her."

"We can't help caring what becomes of you."

"Haden't you better wait till something happens?"

Mr. Godden had waited.

And Sunday evening had come again, and now Eva was with him; she was looking up and smiling at him as he sat on his wall and she said suddenly, "Have you seen Aunt's delphiniums?"

"Aunt's delphiniums? No, I haven't. I don't know your aunt."

"It's strange," she said, "you shouldn't know her—and Arthur—he's my cousin—when you live so close."

He said he wished he did know her aunt.

"Supposing you were to come and look at the delphiniums. They're a perfect picture."

"How about your aunt—and Arthur?"

"That's all right. They're not there. Art's away and aunt's at church and it's Liza's evening out."

Silence.

"We shall have an hour," she said.

Then he knew. He knew that she cared for him. A sudden fierce and violent excitement seized him. He slid down from his wall and followed her. Through the front gate and through the green trellis door into the back garden. Nobody saw them; at this hour the avenue was deserted. It was very quiet there in the back garden; under its ivy covering the little house seemed asleep.

The French windows of the basement floor stood open to the flagged walk.

"Come into my room," she said; and he followed her through the French windows. They hadn't looked at the delphiniums. They had forgotten the delphiniums.

He thought he was going into a girl's sitting-room; but there in the far corner was her narrow black iron bed with its white counterpane. Eva sat on the bed. She patted a place for him beside her. He sat down and they looked at each other and said nothing. His heart thumped loudly in the stillness. Eva's head was lowered, her eyes looked up at him strangely under her stooping forehead. And in that moment he knew he was afraid. He was afraid of his own innocence. He was sad and ashamed because of his innocence. He looked at her and was afraid.

And suddenly, in a flash, her face changed. It flushed. It smiled a sliding, secret, evil smile; and an old memory woke in him. He had seen that look before on a child's face, in the play-room, years ago. He felt again the sensation of that moment. Vera Lister. Vera Lister's look, the look that had uncovered a dirty mystery. The same mystery. It sickened him.

☐ He started up.

"What's the matter?" she said. "You're not going?"

"I am. I don't want to stay."

"But you shall stay. You've come, and you shan't go. Arnold!"

She threw herself on him, and he held her off, his hands sinking into her soft girl's flesh ; he loathed its softness ; he loathed this contact of flesh on flesh ; he loathed Eva. Suddenly she seized his wrist, her face stooped, it darted forwards ; her small sharp teeth bit into the thin edge of his hand, leaving two white prints that reddened. He wrenched himself loose and went from her.

Eva flung herself down on the bed and sent after him a thick choking cry.

July passed. In August Eva walked with Richard, through the cornfield and by Vinings lake. Arnold saw them go.

He waited for him as he came back into the house. Richard's face had the hiding look that Arnold knew ; but when he saw him he drew himself up in swaggering defiance.

" Richard, why do you go about with that girl ? "

" Why shouldn't I ? "

" Because she's a bad lot."

From Richard there came no passionate denial. " How do you know ? " he said.

Arnold told him. He told him what had happened and how he had left her.

Richard laughed. " You were a fool to go," he said, " if you wanted to stay with her."

" I should have been a bigger fool to stay if I wanted to go."

Richard stared at him.

" What put me off was the way she looked at me."

" Oh, that ! That only meant—— Didn't you know what she wanted ? "

" Yes, but I didn't think it would be like that. It was beastly."

Richard laughed again. " Well, of all—— What on earth did you expect ? Women are either virtuous or the other thing. You can't have it both ways."

And one Sunday evening at church time Arnold saw his brother slink into the Larkins' garden and through the trellis door to the back.

Richard stayed.

XXIV

WINIFRED had come back. He had never asked her why she had turned against him. He couldn't see her without remembering her sharp look of fear, and he wondered how much she had understood. She had never spoken to him about Eva Baxter.

And now she had come back to him as if nothing had happened, gentler and more serious than ever, with the little shy smile that wouldn't unstiffen, and a sudden happy lighting up of her eyes behind the big glasses.

Summer passed. The long autumn evenings came and he had more time for reading now. Winifred offered to teach him German ; he had told her he wished he knew it.

"He'll learn faster than you can teach him, Winny," said Wilfrid.

"Then he can teach me."

You could see she was happy at the thought of teaching him.

Three evenings in the week all through the winter she taught him what she knew. She was clever and taught well ; she had a way of making you remember ; and by the spring of next year he had caught up with her and they were learning together. He was now eighteen. Languages came to him as music came to Winifred. The dining-room was given up to them after supper, and they sat together at the table in the lamplight, their heads bent close over the same book. They were reading Heine, the *Buch der Lieder*. They took it in turns. No need to translate now that they understood. You could only feel it in German, Winifred said.

She read in her small, earnest voice :

" ' Die alten, bösen Lieder,
Die Träume schlimm und arg,
Die lasst uns jetzt begraben ;
Holt einen grossen Sarg. . . . ' "

He looked at her. She was lean and white, her blond hair

was sleek and thin, brushed back from her rather high, rather bumpy forehead, and gathered in a tight knob at the back. She stooped low over the book, peering with her short-sighted eyes. Her long, flattened nose poked and peered ; she seemed to be picking out the words with her nose.

"Du bist wie eine Blume." She was a stalky, sunsick flower that couldn't open, a flower without beauty. Not schön, not hold, but rein, utterly rein. He thought of Eva Baxter.

" ' Wisst ihr, warum der Sarg wohl
So gross und schwer muss sein ?
Ich legt' auch meine Liebe
Und meinen Schmerz hinein.' "

"I wish you wouldn't look at me when I'm reading. I can't read if you look at me."

"Why not ?"

"Because I know what you're thinking."

"What am I thinking ?"

"How ugly I am."

"I was thinking how sweet and good you were."

"*Me* sweet and good !"

"Yes. It's sweet and good of you to teach me."

"But I *like* doing it."

He laughed. "Is it only sweet and good to do the things you don't like ? It's sweet and good of you to like it."

"Nonsense ! And you weren't thinking of that. You were thinking how ugly I am. I *am* ugly. It's partly my glasses, but it's mostly me."

"I'm not exactly beautiful myself."

"Beautiful ? Perhaps not. But you're growing ever so much better looking than you were. You're very good-looking."

"I'm sure I'm not. I'm all black and sallow, and my face is crooked."

"I like it," said Winifred. "And if you were as ugly as sin I'd like that, too. It would be *you*, you see."

"I've often wondered what's really me. In a way it seems to be your body and the things it does, and in a way it isn't. But whatever yourself is you can't catch it by itself. You can't say what it is. The minute you try it turns into something that isn't it."

"That's philosophy. You must talk about it with father. It's his subject."

"I thought literature was his subject."

"Oh no! That's only what he plays with."

"I say, he's rather wonderful, isn't he?"

"He's very wonderful. Nobody here knows how wonderful he is. He reads great, deep books in German. Kant and Hegel and Schopenhauer and Von Hartmann. Awfully difficult books."

"Being in business hasn't stopped *him* thinking."

"Nothing would stop father thinking. And it won't stop you."

"I haven't begun to think yet."

"You've begun if you wonder what your self is. But we aren't getting on. It's your turn."

Arnold read :

" ' Mir träumt ich bin der liebe Gott
Und sitz' im Himmel droben,
Und Englein sitzen um mich her
Die meine Verse loben. . . . ' "

His mother disapproved of these readings with Winifred.

"It's a plan," she said, "to get you there and keep you."

The summer of eighteen eighty-one passed and the winter, and the spring of eighty-two. And Arnold was nineteen.

He had begun to think. Not about himself but about religion, and about the existence and nature of God, and the old childish puzzle of the 'Three in One. Why just three? Why not the Many in One? He didn't believe in the God of the Old Testament; and the God of the New Testament, though He was not cruel and jealous and vindictive, like Jehovah, though he seemed to be making a distinct effort to be good and kind, was not much more intelligible. Every thought that had occurred to free-thinkers, since men had begun to think freely, occurred to Arnold now; yet he seemed to himself to be engaged on a unique and original adventure.

Then he remembered how once, long ago, he had heard Wilfrid say that his father didn't believe in God and Jesus Christ. He would ask Wilfrid.

"Wilfrid, is it true that your father doesn't believe in God?"

"Who told you that?"

"You did. Ages ago, when we were kids. Is it true?"

"Well, I don't suppose he believes in your God."

"I don't know," said Arnold, "that I've got a God."

"Oh, you're *there*, are you? You'd better talk to father about it."

And Arnold talked to Mr. Godden.

"I suppose you mean," said Mr. Godden, "do I believe in a God who made the world once for all in a definite time, and has been sitting outside it ever since, only poking it up now and then for fun? A God who can be made to do things and changes his mind every time somebody prays to him? A God who was the Father of Jesus Christ by the Virgin Mary? No, I don't believe in him. No more do you. No more does anybody who thinks metaphysically."

"Do I think metaphysically?"

"Most people do who really think. All thinking begins and ends in metaphysics. You haven't asked me if I believe in any other sort of God?"

"Do you?"

"I neither believe nor disbelieve. I simply don't know. There is a God that could conceivably exist; but I don't know anything about him."

And Mr. Godden began to expound the theory of the Unknown and Unknowable.

"But," said Arnold, "you must know something about him if you know that he's unknown and unknowable. You're saying he's above all that."

"Good. You mean I'm affirming his transcendental existence?"

"Well, you are, aren't you?"

"Mind you, I don't say he exists."

"How do you get at all this? What books ought I to read?"

Mr. Godden sent him away with Herbert Spencer's *First Principles*, Huxley's *Lay Sermons*, Tyndall's *Belfast Address*, Matthew Arnold's *Literature and Dogma* and the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* of Baruch Spinoza. "For a beginning," he said.

And Arnold went on with his thinking.

Months passed. He found Huxley and Tyndall and Matthew Arnold easy enough to follow, but Herbert Spencer lay heavy on the mind; he made prodigious efforts to absorb him. On Wilfrid's advice he borrowed the *Principles of Biology* and the *Principles of Psychology*, determined to do the thing thoroughly while he was about it.

"For goodness' sake," said Wilfrid, "get down to something concrete."

But it seemed to him that what Wilfrid called concrete was

the purest abstraction ; matter was an abstraction, though it was Huxley's god ; while what Wilfrid called abstract was more concrete than bricks and mortar ; it might be the very stuff the world was made of. Wilfrid was wrapped up in his Natural Science at University College. He was happy if he could lay his finger on a fact. Arnold was unhappy till he could get behind the facts, and he had *not* got behind them. When he talked to Wilfrid they stood up before him like a wall, proclaiming themselves alone substantial, and frustrated him.

" You can't get round facts," Wilfrid said.

" I must get round them to get behind them."

" Oh, behind--behind--I can't understand your passion for the backs of things ! Supposing there isn't anything behind ? "

" That's what I want to find out," said Arnold. He was not satisfied with Herbert Spencer and kept up a private quarrel with him while he read. But the fear that he might after all be mistaken made Arnold restless and excited. There was something he ought to know that he didn't know ; there must be some way of stating his objections that would satisfy him if only he could find it ; but as yet he was pitifully ill-equipped. He felt instinctively that there was a sense in which God was knowable (if he existed). If only he could piece his instinct and his thought together. But he couldn't tell whether his thought had any value, and Mr. Godden had told him not to trust his feeling. So that there was conflict in him where there should have been peace.

The absorption of Herbert Spencer took up a whole year. He was now twenty. He seemed to have done nothing.

That year he left off his cricket and his cycling to give himself more time for reading. He had got into the habit of thinking, profoundly and consecutively, while he walked. He became silent at meal-times and his mother wondered what was the matter with him.

She little knew.

It was a Friday evening in June, eighteen eighty-three, Winifred's twenty-first birthday.

The Goddens were giving a party. A big, important party, with music ; two professionals were to play. They had asked Arnold and his mother and Richard. Only Arnold went ; his mother said she heard enough of the Goddens' music through the wall.

The little room was crowded ; the table had been taken

away and the small grand piano dragged into the middle of the floor ; rows of cane-bottomed chairs were ranged round it in a circle. The guests, packed very tight, looked about them with strained, wondering faces, waiting for the music to begin. Mr. Godden, in an attitude of humble deference, was talking to the two professionals. Their names, Goodwin and Elise Neumann, were passed about in sharp whispers, up and down the rows of chairs. Mrs. Godden was flushed and excited ; Albert brooded solemnly on the outer edge of the circle ; Wilfrid moved about in the clear space by the piano, talking to the guests and twinkling as if he thought it absurd and amusing that they should give a party.

Winifred was uplifted and unlike herself. She sat on a front seat, Elise Neumann, the warm, full-blown contralto, on one side of her, and on the other a young girl. When she saw Arnold she signed to him to come and sit with them. She watched his coming.

And as he came, wriggling through the rows of chairs to the centre, his eyes were drawn from Winifred to the young girl beside her. She was only a child ; she couldn't, he thought, be more than thirteen or fourteen, and she was beautiful. Her beauty filled the room like music ; you were aware of nothing else. Her face stood out among the crowded faces as one perfect flower stands out in a full garden bed. It lifted and looked at him as he came towards them. It was rounded, honey-white and soft, a child's face ; its little straight, clean-cut nose widening towards the eager nostrils, its full-lipped, Greek mouth grave and sad, heavily moulded at the corners. Her eyes were pure grey, black lashed and black browed. Her brown hair was cut in a thick square fringe on her forehead, it hung short and square to the middle of her neck, where the shining, solid mass of it curled in.

Winifred called to him, " Arnold, I want to introduce you to my cousin, Rosalind Verney. Linda, this is Arnold Waterlow."

Linda rose, in shy politeness, holding out a thin, long hand, and stood till he was seated beside her. She was very straight and slender, dressed in a child's white frock of gathered muslin, straight and slender, with a wide blue sash.

" She's going to play to us presently," Winifred said.

" What do you play ? "

" Violin," said Rosalind in her high, sweet child's voice.

" She's going to be a professional."

"Not yet——" said Rosalind.

"Why haven't I seen you before?" he said.

"Because I wasn't here."

"She's been in Germany, studying," Winifred explained. "And her people live in Gloucester. This is the first time she's stayed here. That's why you haven't seen her. . . . Take care of her while I play Goodwin's accompaniment."

Goodwin was seated in the middle of the circle with his 'cello ready. Arnold didn't hear what Goodwin played. The beauty of the playing passed into the perfect beauty of Rosalind. She listened, as Winifred would have said, with her eyes, with her whole face, eyes looking wide out, set open to the sounds, her lips parted in the moment of excitement.

To take care of Linda—— If he only could—if there was any way. She would need taking care of, she was so breakable and young. He wondered what it would feel like when Linda played.

Goodwin had finished. Elise Neumann sang; he didn't listen. He was vaguely aware of sounds, extraordinary sounds, circling round Linda's face.

Then Linda rose; she stooped to her violin case. Arnold stooped; he lifted the lid, and took out the violin and gave it her and the little white silk handkerchief which was to lie on her shoulder.

She stepped into the middle of the circle and stood up with her violin; she scraped the strings for a moment, tuning it, then she paused; then she began to play, bending her head sideways to her violin as if she loved it. She played the "Schlummerlied" and "Träumerei" of Schumann. She never looked once at her audience; she listened, sweetly, naïvely, to her own playing. She was no longer Rosalind Verney, the Goddens' cousin, she was a nameless child alone in an enchanted wood, a child enchanted, dreaming, playing to herself, smiling to herself as if she said, "How nice. I'm all alone. Nobody is listening."

When she had finished she laid her violin in her arms as if it were a baby; she looked down at it lovingly; she was a child with a doll. She seemed not to hear the hand-clapping and the cries. She turned dreamily to her seat beside Arnold.

Elise Neumann got up and kissed her. Goodwin shook her hand and they praised her. She smiled a little dreamy, enchanted smile, not yet waked out of her dream-playing.

And they made her play again.

This time she played a Romance by—— Arnold never

knew who it was by. Winifred told him, but he wasn't listening; he remembered it for ever as "Rosalind's Romance." And of "Rosalind's Romance" he knew nothing but that while it lasted it drew his heart out of him in longing and in pain. Longing for strange, unknown beauty, beauty that moved in the strange, unknown music, flowing out of Rosalind. It was as if her whole body and her soul played to him; a child's body, a child's soul, unconscious of the passion they created; throbbing with unborn passion, the passion they would some day know.

It was over. Elise Neumann sang a noisy Italian song. Goodwin played again; then Winifred and Rosalind played together: the "Kreutzer Sonata."

It was too much for Rosalind. She struggled with the difficult music; her body and soul struggled with the strange unknown passion; she was a child and helpless, and she knew it. Suddenly, in the middle of the first movement, she broke off, she stamped her foot with rage and cried out, "Stop, Winny! I *can't*!"

She laid her violin down on the piano and burst into tears. Goodwin and Elise Neumann closed round her and tried to comfort her, but her writhing shoulders shook them off; she got away from them and found her place beside Arnold. She looked at him with piteous eyes.

"I oughtn't to have played it. I'm too young. Winny made me."

"Don't be unhappy," he said. "It doesn't matter."

"It does matter—awfully."

"Not as much as you think. Nothing ever does. You were playing beautifully before you broke down."

"Have you ever broken down?"

"I've never tried anything big enough."

"You can't think how silly it makes you feel. Crying, too."

"You did it very prettily."

"Did I? Isn't my nose red?"

"Not a bit."

"Oh, there's Goodwin coming again! I can't bear it. Don't go away and leave me."

"I wasn't going to leave you."

"You don't mind? You're the only one who doesn't make me feel awful."

"I'm so glad I don't."

"Mademoiselle," said Goodwin, "I shall hear you play the

"Kreutzer Sonata" in seven years' time, and you will play it magnificently."

"Seven years? I may be dead first."

She wouldn't be comforted and she wouldn't play again.

"If only I hadn't tried it," she said.

That night as he lay in bed, Arnold kept on hearing Rosalind's playing. He hoped that he would dream of her, of the child in the enchanted wood, but when he slept he had an ugly dream of Eva Baxter and woke with the horror. And once more, in his memory, Rosalind's music went on and on, drawing his heart with it, and Rosalind's innocent honey-white face hung before him in the dark.

He saw her again on Monday evening when he went with her and Winifred and Wilfrid to the Popular Concert in St. James's Hall.

All day at Soper and Horne's he was restless and excited, thinking of the evening. All day he had heard Rosalind's music going on and on in the back of his mind. He was an invoice clerk now, and all day Rosalind's face had kept coming between him and his invoices. And the smell of the cheeses had seemed more abominable than ever. He had shuddered under the powerful attack of Limburger and the creamy corruption of Camembert.

But in the evening all memory of these things went from him as if they had never been. He sat between Winifred and Rosalind in the gallery. Carl Schüller was giving his Pianoforte Recital.

He played Beethoven, the "Sonata Appassionata." Stolidly, heavily he played, with a trampling of his enormous hands, his great body shaking with the sounds it made. In the tremendous last movement his hands moved like elephant's feet, heavily, stolidly, with deliberate precision. Presto—prestissimo: but he wouldn't wake up.

"He's no business," said Arnold, "to tackle Beethoven."

"Oh, Arnold——" Winifred was shocked. "Carl Schüller! He's the greatest pianist in Europe."

"I don't care how great he is. He plays like an elephant."

"You don't know what you're talking about," Winifred said.

"He *does*, Winny. He's quite right," said Rosalind. "Schüller's nothing but a great clumsy animal. He oughtn't to touch the 'Appassionata.' I wanted to stick pins into him all the time to wake him up. He's got no more temperament than an elephant."

"Elephants have got lots of temperament," said Wilfrid.

"Well, a fish, then."

"What do you know about temperament?" said Winifred.

"I know all about it. It's what Goodwin says I've got. You're no good if you haven't got it."

"Then you think you'll play better than Schüler?" Winifred said.

"No. I shall play differently."

Schüler had come again. He was playing a Nocturne of Chopin now.

"Oh dear," said Rosalind. "What next?"

Winifred was vexed with Arnold and Rosalind because they had stuck together and hadn't agreed with her.

After that there were one or two evenings at the Goddens' Winifred and Rosalind playing together and by turns, Arnold listening. Nobody talked much; it was music nearly all the time.

"Did you hear it, mother?" said Arnold, when he got home.

"I should think I did," said his mother; "it was enough to wake the dead. I shall be thankful when that girl goes."

It was dreadful to Arnold to think that Rosalind must go. But he thought she would be there for weeks yet. Then without his knowing it, the last evening came.

It was Sunday. He was talking to Rosalind. Winifred watched them from the far end of the room, and her face had a look of sadness and of fear.

"How long are you going to be here?"

"I'm going back on Monday. To-morrow."

"To Germany?"

"Yes, to Leipzig."

"And I shan't see you again?"

"Oh yes. I shall come back."

"When?"

"In three years."

"I shan't see you for three years?"

"I'm afraid not. It's beastly, isn't it?"

"Perhaps the next time I see you, you'll be playing in St. James's Hall. You'll be stuck up on a platform, with rows of people between us, and I shan't be able to speak to you."

"Yes, you shall. You shall come round afterwards and tell me how you loved it. You *will* love it, won't you? I shall be playing ever so much better then than I do now."

"You could play in St. James's Hall now."

"I couldn't fill it. Some little hall, perhaps. My people would like me to play in public, but I won't."

"Why not?"

"Because I don't want to begin that yet. It's better to keep quiet and go on learning. I like learning. When I'm really good it'll be time enough. I'm only a child now."

Yes. She was only a child. But he kept on forgetting it. For the most part she talked to him naively and innocently, like a child, then, all of a sudden, she would turn on him with some queer grown-up thing.

"If I began playing in public now it might do something to me."

"What could it do?"

"Oh, something awful. I might stop where I am for ever. I should be a wonderful child and never anything more. Fancy stopping dead at fourteen! Wouldn't that be awful?"

"I don't know. I don't see how you could be much more wonderful than you are."

"That's because you don't know. I mean to be. I shan't be happy if I'm not."

"Is that what makes you happy? Being wonderful?"

"I don't know. Do *you* know what makes you happy?"

"Yes. Being with you."

He felt his face flaming. He felt that the whole world had changed since he said it. There was the world before and the world after, divided by three words. *He* had changed; he had grown ages older.

"Me? Oh—but you're a man and I'm a child."

"That doesn't make any difference."

"Aren't you happy when you're with Winny?"

"Winny? No. Not in the same way. I like her playing."

"Her playing——?"

"Yes. She plays magnificently, doesn't she?"

"Pretty well, for an amateur. She wants training. She ought to go to Germany, like me."

"Can't she?"

"Oh yes. Uncle Albert would send her; but she won't go."

"Why not?"

"She doesn't want to leave Ilford."

"Ilford. This rotten hole? But *why*?"

"You'd better ask her."

"I shall."

"No. You mustn't. She won't tell you. That's her secret. You mustn't say anything or she'll think I've told you. Promise you won't say anything."

He laughed. She was so serious and so frightened. "All right. I promise."

"But really—on your honour?"

"Really, on my honour."

"Winny's a darling."

He laughed again. "Did I say she wasn't?"

"No. But I don't think you know."

"Know what?"

"Why, what a darling she is."

"I've known her longer than I've known you."

"How long?"

"Let me think. Eleven years."

"And you've known me nine days. Yet you're happy with me. That is funny."

"Isn't it?"

Her innocent child's face took on its look of grown-up wisdom. "Perhaps you wouldn't be so happy if you knew me better," she said.

"I should be happier. I don't like to think there was a time when I didn't know you."

"Yes. And there may be a time when you won't know me any more."

"I should always know you. Or do you mean when I shan't see you again?"

"Oh, you'll see me when I come back. You'll be here?"

"I? I shall always be here. I can't get away."

"Where would you go if you could get away?"

"Leipzig."

She laughed. "I wish you would. Three years is a long time, isn't it? You'll be ever so much older."

"So will you."

"I shall be seventeen."

"And I shall be twenty-three."

From her corner at the far end of the room Winifred watched them. Her face kept its look of sadness and of fear.

"I am going to ask Winny to play," said Rosalind.

Winifred played. Into her playing there came something fierce and stormy and defiant. Her little hands raged up and down the keys. The great loud chords were challenges. She defied her sadness and her fear.

Rosalind whispered to him, "She's playing better. Something's waked her up."

Winifred rose and sank on to the sofa, exhausted with her playing.

And Rosalind played again. A mazurka, advancing, turning, retreating, holding itself back with sudden wilful pauses; then quickening, breaking out madly, while the bass beat a measure with a deep thrumming, beating the excitement up and up. Then a ping, an accelerated succession of clipped sounds as Rosalind's fingers picked at the strings. Then the return to the first measure, gravely advancing. A sudden ceasing on one sharp high chord.

Her fear had come back to Winifred as she watched Arnold's listening face.

The next day Rosalind went back to Germany. Weeks passed, and gradually Winifred's fear and sadness left her.

XXV

ARNOLD was twenty-one. He was still an invoice clerk at Soper and Horne's with a salary of thirty shillings a week. He saw no prospect of ever being anything but an invoice clerk at thirty shillings a week. Just at first the thirty shillings, being three times the amount he had started with, seemed a large income. He could do many more things with it. He could pay his mother ten shillings a week for board and laundry, keep ten shillings for his clothes, and when he had paid for his fare and his lunches he had still four shillings a week left over for amusements. Amusements meant buying books, and going to concerts, and taking his mother or Charlotte or Winifred Godden to the play.

He could do all that but he couldn't do more, and he couldn't buy enough books. And he wanted to marry. He meant to marry. He meant to marry Rosalind Verney some day, if she would have him, when she came back from Germany. Two more years. But in two years' time he would be no more able to marry than he was now. You couldn't marry on seventy-five pounds a year. It would be hardly safe on two hundred, and when, at this rate, would he ever earn two hundred a year?

He had long ago ceased to take a pride in earning his own living and in doing his work well; he had gone on doing it well (he would have been ashamed of himself if he hadn't), but the high satisfaction in doing it had gone. Gone the ambition to outspeed Peters and Nathan, though the accomplishment remained. He could outspeed any clerk in the office if he tried. And what then? He was no better off than they when he had got through more and more work.

And he hated it; he hated the long, monotonous, uninteresting grind; he had never learned, he never would learn, resignation and acquiescence. His whole soul rose in revolt against Soper and Horne's when he thought of what it had taken from

him. Seven years. Seven years that were all his youth, years when he should have been running loose in the playing fields of Chelmsed, years when he should have been at Oxford finishing his education in a superb leisure. He thought, with an agony of regret, of the good long mornings that he had never had ; he thought of what he might have done, what he might have been if he had had them. And he had never got used to the smell of the cheeses. They were as disgusting to him now as on his first day.

" If you hate it like that," said Richard, " why don't you chuck it and go out to Canada or somewhere, and farm ? "

There were moments when the career of a cowboy appealed to him, riding for miles over the prairies, rounding up cattle ; but he had the sense to see that riding after cattle would be even more incompatible with the intellectual life than Soper and Horne's. Besides, he couldn't leave his mother. Richard wouldn't look after her, Richard would never know whether she was happy or unhappy, and Charlotte was only at home in the holidays. Nobody cared for the darling as he did. The knowledge that his mother would never care for him as she cared for Richard made no difference to him. He knew why she didn't care. Charlotte had told him. He had been born when his brother Tossy died, and the shock of Tossy's death had checked her love for him ; he had been given to her instead of Tossy, and she had resented the substitution. She could never feel for him as she felt for Richard who had come first. He could understand all that. It was simply his miserable luck that he should have been born when Tossy died.

And there were still ways in which he could be sure of her. She had always come to him, the child of her unhappiness, when she was unhappy ; she always would come, because he understood her. And she had hated his going to Soper and Horne's almost as much as she hated Richard's stock-broking.

Then, in the summer of eighteen eighty-four, the change came. Mr. Godden stepped in and delivered him. He made him leave Soper and Horne's and come into his office as an invoice clerk at a hundred a year, to begin with.

" I don't say," he said, " that the work will be more exciting than what you're doing now. It's the same work. But the pay's a bit better, and you'll rise quicker."

" And I shall get away from those damned cheeses."

" Well—my tea smells, but it smells nicer."

It did. From the great green canisters, from the silver-fawn

tea-chests decorated with strange black Chinese characters, there came the most delicious, dry and delicate scents. Arnold's office was on the first floor next to Mr. Godden's. The building was in Tower Street, swept now and again by a cool wind from the river. Arnold loved its clear, clean fragrance and the shining brightness of his polished mahogany pen. The names of the teas were foreign and exciting : Finest Souchong, Choicest Pure Moning, Finest Lapsang.

It seemed that Mr. Godden sold no tea that was not choice or fine or pure. To breathe the air impregnated with his teas was a slight, exquisite intoxication.

"Am I to hate it?" Arnold said.

"Yes. Hate it as much as I hate it. You'll do your job just as well, as I've done mine. I've worked it up from a small hole and corner business to what it is now."

"Hating it?"

"Yes, hating it most of the time. That doesn't mean that I'm not interested in it. I really *want* to sell the best and purest teas. There are even moments when I take a sort of pride in selling 'em. And if you can take a pride in helping me to sell 'em, so much the better. But I don't mean you to be swallowed up in tea any more than I'm swallowed. I know you'll work for me no worse because you can call your soul your own."

"I hope I shall do the work all right, sir."

"I know you will. Remember you're doing it for a fantastic tea-merchant who happens to care for your soul even more than he cares for his own tea. I don't suppose Soper and Horne ever thought about your soul, Arnold."

"I don't suppose they did, sir. It doesn't get into the invoices."

Yet it seemed to Arnold that his soul did get into Mr. Godden's invoices; he wasn't able to keep it out. An invoice of Soper and Horne's was a detestable piece of work to be got through as quickly as possible and forgotten; an invoice of Mr. Godden's was to be remembered for ever as a personal service he had done for him. Mr. Godden's mere presence, so close to him in the inner office, gave a happy charm to the long, monotonous day. At any minute he might come out and speak to him. He hardly ever passed through the clerks' office without some sign that he was aware of him.

"I suppose," his mother said, "you're happy now that you've got that man with you always."

He *was* happy. He only laughed when she said bitterly,

"He's got you now for good and all. You won't be able to call your soul your own."

"Whatever is, is in God, and without God nothing can be or be conceived."

His soul was so much his own that his thinking went on more steadily than ever now. He thought for hours on end about the nature of knowledge and reality. How do we come to know anything? How did there come to be anything to know? What is reality? What do we know and what are we doing when we know it? He had read Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. This Jew, writing in the seventeenth century, had anticipated half of what Matthew Arnold had said in *Literature and Dogma*. And from the *Treatise* he had gone on excitedly to the *Ethics*. There, if anywhere, was the answer to his questions. He learned that "it belongs to the essence of the human mind to have an adequate knowledge of the eternal and infinite essence of God"; that "he who loves God cannot endeavour that God should love him in return." (A hard saying.) That "our mind, in so far as it knows itself and the body under the form of eternity, has to that extent necessarily a knowledge of God and knows that it is in God and is conceived through God"; and that "God loves himself with an infinite intellectual love."

(A harder saying; but wait.)

"The intellectual love of the mind towards God is that very love whereby God loves himself, not in so far as he is infinite, but in so far as he can be explained through the essence of the human mind regarded under the form of eternity; in other words, the intellectual love of the mind towards God is part of the infinite love wherewith God loves himself.

"From what has been said we clearly understand wherein our salvation, or blessedness, or freedom, consists, namely, in the constant and eternal love towards God, or in God's love towards man."

Thought and extension, mind and matter, were then one in the eternal and infinite Substance which was God; two aspects they were of God, two out of an infinite number of unknown aspects.

One in God. And yet—and yet—— It was all a monstrous begging of the question. Spinoza didn't prove God's existence, he simply took it for granted. You could only know God as

thought and as extension. But if thought and extension were as infinite and eternal and necessary as God was, why couldn't they stand on their own feet without him? Because they would fall apart without God to hold them together? But on Spinoza's own showing they fell apart inside God, and God only knew how thought could know extension. The enthralling, torturing problem remained unsolved. Arnold was deeply moved by Spinoza and deeply unsatisfied.

"Why," he asked Mr. Godden, "does he get at your emotions that way, when he leaves your intellect unconvinced?"

"Why? Because you're a born mystic, Arnold; and a born sceptic. You'll never have peace. Your mysticism and your scepticism will be fighting each other all your life long."

Arnold insisted. "I'm not a mystic. I don't know what mysticism is."

"You're a mystic all the same. Your mysticism is developed in exact proportion to your logic. Hence the trouble. To get back to Spinoza. His Substance is simply Herbert Spencer's Unknown and Unknowable. It solves no problems."

"But it isn't unknown and unknowable. To know the world in the form of eternity is knowing God."

"But *can* you know it in the form of eternity?"

"I believe you can."

"That's your religious sense again. If you see it written, 'Whatever is, is in God,' the statement goes to your head like old brandy. But there's no logic in it. If you want logic read Hegel. But you'd better read Berkeley first."

He read Berkeley.

He read: "All the choir of heaven and furniture of the earth, in a word all these bodies which compose the mighty frame of the world, have not any subsistence without a mind—that their *being is to be perceived or known*; that, consequently, so long as they are not actually perceived by me, or do not exist in my mind or that of any other created spirit, they must either have no existence at all, or else subsist in the mind of some Eternal Spirit—it being perfectly unintelligible, and involving all the absurdity of abstraction, to attribute to any single part of them an existence independent of a spirit. . . . There is not any other Substance than spirit or *that which perceives*."

There was his answer: so clear, so simple and so easy. Why hadn't he thought of it before? Why had he worried himself when the key to the secret lay close under [his eyes all the time?

Mr. Godden said it was much too easy, too simple and too clear, and he'd better read Kant and Hegel.

Arnold read Kant and Hegel. Going very slowly through the German, leaving off for long rests and coming back to them again, Kant and Hegel took him another two years.

Kant by turns exalted and depressed him. He showed him the world arising in thought more certainly than Berkeley's world and to a more perfect logic ; but Kant's God was as unknown and unknowable as Herbert Spencer's. In the end you were cheated ; with all your thinking you got no nearer to the transcendent Reality. Thought could never reach the Thing-in-Itself, the secret of the universe. Arnold's mind staggered back from its encounter with Kant, unsatisfied.

He went on to Hegel. Thought became alive and began to move, and you saw the world arising in its movement. The secret of the universe was out. Thought was the Thing-in-Itself ; it was the Absolute. It had no need to go beyond itself to find Reality. According to Kant you were shut up in the world of appearances, and every door of escape was guarded by the swords of contradiction ; at every turn you were caught between the hard, piercing points of the opposites. According to Hegel the marriage of opposites was the very movement of Spirit itself. No contradiction was final and absolute ; Being and Not-Being were the same ; thought swung from opposite to opposite, taking up each pair into its own peace, its own unity.

At its highest point pure thought passed over into nature. Spirit itself created its own extreme antagonist. It lost itself in nature to find itself again, to be made ever richer and thicker ; its movement was a perpetual dying to live a higher life, till all Nature became one with God. You could think of the universe as one stuff, woven in a many-coloured running pattern, growing ever closer and more intricate, one pattern for ever different and for ever the same. Or as a system of many crystal spheres, enclosed and enclosing. The first sphere of pure Being split into the first pair of opposites, two spheres that swung apart, and were instantly enclosed in a larger sphere which in its turn split and was enclosed, and split, and so on, till the one crystal round of Spirit held them all.

Then, could you say that what had appeared as a process in time was really a timeless state ? That the pattern existed for ever in the mind of God, finished and whole ? That spirit had held all its spheres together, enclosed in itself, from the beginning ? That it always had been what it was now, and

that to see the world and its movement stilled in the transparence of the enclosing spheres was to see it in the form of eternity? Spirit swung clear and free, uncontained, carrying all the worlds, carrying thought itself.

He wondered, did Hegel's philosophy content him? Wasn't it, for all its tremendous complicated pattern, too simple, too transparent? Didn't it take away from the exciting darkness and mystery of the world? And the innocent unreasonableness of sense—there wasn't a place for it in the shining crystal spheres. Nor yet for the peculiar behaviour of physical things. If you came to think of it, there was no reason why fire should boil water; it simply did it every time.

"Of course," said Mr. Godden, "if you *like* to think your God goes on like Hegel's Absolute——"

Arnold owned that though Hegel seemed to him nearer to the truth than any of them, he too left him unsatisfied.

"It's the sceptic and the mystic in you that aren't satisfied. Hegel gives you too much for your scepticism to swallow and too little for your mysticism to get drunk on. You'd much better take up with Herbert Spencer."

But Arnold refused to take up with Herbert Spencer. Hegel's Absolute was better than the Unknown and Unknowable. He said that Berkeley and Hegel would see him through. Mr. Godden supposed that there was something about them that appealed to his perversity.

When Wilfrid accused Arnold of always backing the wrong horse, Arnold replied that nobody knew for certain which horse was going to win, that you must take *some* risks, and that the race, the race was the thing, the spectacle of all time and all existence, not guinea-pigs' nervous systems. Wilfrid retorted that the spectacle of a guinea-pig's nervous system might make him modify his views of time and existence.

And Mr. Godden shook his kind head. "Let him be, Wilfrid, let him be. Let him get at the truth his own way. Guinea-pigs haven't made you a metaphysician."

"They haven't, thank God," said Wilfrid, and the discussion broke up in laughter.

Nobody but the Goddens knew about Arnold's secret life of thinking. He had kept it hidden from his mother. He couldn't bear her to know that he didn't believe in the God she believed in. He was aware that this search for truth, for the ultimate reality, was nothing more nor less than the search for God, and

that he would be restless all his life until he had found him. He could only conceive God under the form of metaphysical truth. But if he told his mother that, she wouldn't understand what he meant. The highest metaphysical truth would seem to her falsehood, and the nearer he got to God the further she would think he had gone from him. And God was not a subject she could discuss without passion or prejudice. If she knew how he talked to the Goddens—

There was no reason why she should ever know.

Yet in the end she did know. Arnold reckoned without Mrs. Godden and her incurable habit of talking about Mr. Godden, and Mrs. Godden had called on Mrs. Draper, the doctor's wife, and told her about the wonderful arguments her husband had with young Waterlow, and how he was helping young Waterlow with his reading, and how young Waterlow was deep in the philosophical books which Mrs. Godden had thought nobody but Mr. Godden could understand, and how he could talk about them quite intelligently. And Mrs. Draper told Mrs. Farmer, the curate's wife, and Mrs. Farmer told Mr. Farmer, and Mr. Farmer called on Mrs. Waterlow and told her. He said he thought it was a pity that a young man like Arnold should have taken to philosophy, that philosophy was a very dangerous study for a young man, if he had no better guide than Mr. Godden, who was a free-thinker, and that Herbert Spencer and "those Germans" were all free-thinkers.

The minute he had gone Mrs. Waterlow called on Mrs. Godden. It was a Saturday afternoon and she had seen Mr. Godden working in his front garden. It was Mr. Godden that she wanted to talk to.

Abruptly, in the passion of her fright, she turned him from his bedding-out plants.

"Mr. Godden, is it true that you're teaching Arnold to read philosophy?"

"Mr. Godden said there wasn't very much left to teach him, which was about the worst answer he could have made.

"You don't mean to say he's gone deep in?"

"He's gone so deep in that he can't be got out in a hurry."

"Oh, Mr. Godden, I beg of you, please, *please* don't encourage him."

"I assure you he doesn't need any encouragement. But why shouldn't I encourage him?"

"Because, whatever you may choose to think about religion, you've no right to lead him astray."

Mr. Godden became intent on his hands, which were caked with wet earth. It seemed a long time before he answered.

"I haven't led him astray."

"You have," said Mrs. Waterlow firmly, "if you've made him think as you do."

"He doesn't think as I do. Arnold will always think for himself."

"But will he think as he was taught to think?"

Mr. Godden considered it. "Probably not. In fact, certainly not."

"You know, then?"

"I know that he must go on thinking. You can't stop him, Mrs. Waterlow. No power on earth will stop him. The boy has a passion for truth and he's got to satisfy it."

"Truth? What truth will he know if he's an unbeliever? Is he, or is he not an unbeliever?"

"You mean does he, or does he not believe as you do?"

"I mean, does he believe in the God of the Bible, or have you taught him your own unbelief?"

"I've taught him nothing. I've no right to talk to you about what Arnold does or doesn't believe. You must ask him yourself."

And that evening she asked him.

Arnold told her it was not a subject he cared to talk about.

"You can talk about it to Mr. Godden."

"Godden, yes. He's different. He knows."

"And your mother doesn't know."

"I mean, he knows what I'm after."

"I don't. I'll grant you that," said his mother with the small, dry bitterness he knew so well.

"Then," said Arnold, "what's the good of talking?"

"Better be honest. Say at once that you're an unbeliever."

"No, mother, it's not so simple. The truth's there, somewhere. You and I try to get at it differently; we should see it differently if we did get at it. If I say I'm an unbeliever, that would be true in your sense, but it wouldn't be true in mine."

"And what's your sense, pray?"

"I can't talk about it," he said again.

"I knew what it would be," she said, "when you took up with that man."

"Don't, mother. I owe everything to him—intellectually."

"I know it," she wailed. "He has made you what he is."

"I wish he could. I wish I'd half his intellect."

"His intellect? It's his intellect that's made him an unbeliever. What's the good of his intellect if it does that? If you've given up God and Jesus Christ, Arnold, what's to keep you from sinning?"

"Disgust, probably. Or whatever keeps Godden from sin. I don't suppose anybody sins less than he does."

"He sinned when he took you from me. I sinned when I let you go."

"Come, mother darling, you couldn't have stopped me, you know."

"No. I couldn't have stopped you. You've always been the one that's given me trouble, Arnold."

"I'm sorry, mother."

It was hard. There was Richard, getting drunk and going about with the most awful women; Richard, who didn't care if he made her suffer; and she knew nothing about it, didn't try to know; but he, Arnold, couldn't think the most innocent thought but she couldn't rest till she had got at it, worrying it out of him. She had done it when he was a child; she was doing it now; she would always do it, and he would always be defenceless before her. If Richard didn't give her trouble that was only because she let Richard alone.

He took up the *Phenomenology of the Spirit* and began to read again. But between the lines he could hear her vexed breathing and when he looked at her she was crying.

He thought: Damn Spinoza. Damn Berkeley. Damn Kant and Hegel, if they make her cry.

He sprang up and went to her. He put his arms round her and kissed her. But she drew back and pushed him off.

"Go away," she said. "You can't make it right by kissing. I don't want your kisses."

It was like that evening when he was a child, after he had played with the Listers. The little thing was implacable.

"Implacable," he said, and laughed.

"It isn't a laughing matter, Arnold."

And it wasn't.

XXVI

It was time now for Rosalind to come back. But Rosalind did not come. He would be certain to hear from the Goddens if she were coming. Every day he thought he would hear, but they never said anything. He couldn't bear this uncertainty, and one evening he asked Winifred. He could trust her to keep his secret if she guessed it.

"When is your cousin Rosalind coming back?"

"Rosalind? Do you remember her?"

"Of course I remember her. She was to come back in three years. And it's more than three years now."

"She isn't coming; she won't be back for another two years."

"But why not?" He tried to keep dismay out of his voice. But Winifred had seen something; she looked frightened and uneasy, as she used to look when he listened to Rosalind's playing. He wondered why. Was it possible that she was jealous of Rosalind's playing? That wouldn't be like Winifred. She had been so proud of Rosalind, so glad that Rosalind belonged to her.

"She won't come back," said Winifred, "till she's sure of herself."

"Sure of herself?"

"Sure that she's perfect. She could have played in public long ago and been a furious success, just because she was so young; but she didn't care about that sort of thing. She only cares about being perfect."

"I know. She told me."

"Did she? She must have liked you, then."

"Do you think she did, really?"

"I'm sure she did. She never would talk about her playing to people if she didn't care for them. When she played I don't think she knew they were listening. There's something awfully fine about Rosalind."

"There is," he said.

"You saw that?"

"I couldn't help seeing. It's as if she were miles away from any of us."

"She is miles away. It's frightfully difficult to get near to Rosalind. But you must have got near."

"I don't see how I could."

"I do. There's something about you, Arnold, that brings you near. I say things to you I couldn't ever say to anybody else. It's something I feel about you. I suppose Linda felt it too."

He said nothing, but his heart thumped and the blood streamed into his face, a terrific blush, creeping up to his eyes and among the roots of his hair. Winifred must have seen it, she must know that he loved Rosalind. Her face was gentle and sad, as if she were sorry for him.

"It's funny," she said, "how we can talk about Linda as if she were here when she isn't—when we haven't seen her since she was a kid."

"She isn't a kid now. She'll be quite old when she comes back."

"Seventeen—nineteen. That isn't old. Think of me and how old I am."

He did think of her. She must be twenty-four now, and she looked thirty. She had been a child and she was a woman, but she had never been young in between. Suddenly he felt sorry for Winifred because she had never been young.

"And I shall never play like Rosalind," she said. "I'm too old. I should have gone to Germany years and years ago."

"Why didn't you?"

"I don't know. I wanted to be here."

Then he remembered how Rosalind had told him that was Winny's secret. To think of Winny having a secret!

"How funny of you!" he said.

"Oh, awfully funny. You don't know how funny it was." She laughed a little tight, ironic laugh without amusement. It was not in her to be amused at herself; she couldn't really think of herself as funny.

He thought: "There's something queer about her," and again he wondered what it was. He wondered for the first time whether she were happy.

And when he had left her he thought no more about her. He was absorbed, utterly, in his own unhappiness.

Two years before he could see Rosalind ; twenty-four months, a hundred and four weeks, after waiting three years and being sure he would see her at the end of them. He hadn't conceived it possible that Rosalind could stay longer than three years in Leipzig. What could she want with five years' training? He remembered that she had broken down in the " Kreutzer Sonata," but did it take five years to learn it? What pitch of unearthly perfection had she dreamed of? In two years she would be nineteen, and he wanted to see her as she was now, at seventeen, keeping her look of the enchanted child. In two more years she might be so changed that he wouldn't know her for the same Rosalind. And she might fall in love with some beastly long-haired German musician. God only knew what mightn't happen.

The three years had passed somehow, they had seemed three centuries, and here were two more centuries on the top of them. He didn't know how he was going to live through them.

The days passed. Mr. Godden raised his salary to three pounds a week, which was a hundred and fifty-six pounds a year. He wondered whether Rosalind's uncle had done this because he had guessed his secret (Arnold felt that it stuck out of him for everybody to see) and wanted to give him hope ; or whether, guessing it, he meant to show him that this was all he might expect. He couldn't marry on a hundred and fifty-six pounds a year. Perhaps that was the most that he would ever earn, so that he would never be able to marry at all. He couldn't ask Mr. Godden when, if ever, he would be earning two hundred.

Weeks passed. Months passed. Time hung over him, shadowing all his thoughts, monstrous and appalling, impenetrable thickness of Time ; he would never get through it. He told himself that it would pass somehow, and that at twenty-five he would still be young. He filled in time with reading : Plato and Aristotle now. He measured time by the *Dialogues*, and by chapters finished in his *Metaphysics*, by the slow progress of his thinking. For the last three years he had taken to cycling, and running and playing games again, so that he might present his body to Rosalind in a state of perfect fitness, with taut, hard muscles, fine and slender. He remembered how Winifred had told him he was good-looking. He examined his face now and then anxiously, to see how it was getting on. In the summer and autumn he got up early, and ran across Wanstead Flats, and stripped and swam in the river Roding. The sight of his naked body filled him with a superb satisfaction. He wanted to be fit and he *was* fit.

Winter came and the long evenings when he read, sometimes aloud to his mother, more often, for she was merciful, to himself.

Plato and Aristotle supported him in his conviction that the world was a world of appearance only, Plato's cave of the shadows, and that spirit was the reality behind it ; the " mind " of Aristotle contained the world ; it was Hegel's shining crystal sphere, it was Spinoza's Substance ; it was God, the Thought of thought.

Wilfrid laughed at his metaphysics ; he kept on reminding him that the chances were there wasn't any God at all. Wilfrid was lecturer in biology at University College now. Things hadn't turned out quite as he had planned them at Chelmsed ; he hadn't gone on that expedition to the Tropics to study wild animals. He had settled down to his routine work of lecturing, and setting examination papers and correcting them. He was happy. He didn't seem ever to think of South America and Central Africa and the book that Godden and Waterlow were to have written. He laughed when you reminded him of *Wild Animals of the Tropics* ; he said the students of University College were wild enough for him. His little eyes twinkled, more than ever, friendly and teasing. Wilfrid's body was growing thicker every day, as his mind settled immovably in its groove, the stomach rounding gently. Time didn't bother Wilfrid, nor a rounding stomach. He had no dreams, there was nothing that he hoped for and waited for. Yet he was happy.

Winter passed and spring. Only another year. Time had shrunk to half its thickness. Arnold felt that somehow he was getting through. But the suspense was awful. Supposing when the two years were over Rosalind never came ? A year more : and anything might happen in a year. And this last year was unbearable ; from moment to frightful moment it crept and crawled ; he thought it would never end.

Yet somehow it ended.

Early in the autumn of eighteen eighty-eight he met Rosalind again.

One day as they walked together from the station Mr. Godden said, " Come in this evening. Linda is here."

Linda is here. In two hours he would see her.

He went in. Thank God it wasn't a party. Nobody was there to meet Rosalind but Goodwin, the 'cellist, and himself. He went in afraid, afraid that she would be different, afraid that

she would have forgotten him. Or that Winifred would come to him and say, "Linda is going to be married."

A tall girl was talking to Wilfrid, she turned as Arnold came in and looked at him. He knew her by her sad, grave mouth, her Greek mouth, heavily moulded at the corners, by her grey eyes and black eyebrows and by the square-cut, solid, shining fringe above them. Her hair had grown; it was coiled in a thick rope on the top of her head, above the fringe; gold and bronze shone in the dark of the brown. The fringe kept her the same while it made her strange and unlike the others. Under it Rosalind's wide-open, innocent child's face looked at him; the same beauty, but clearer cut, the vagueness of its childhood gone. Under the crossed folds of her white silk bodice he could see her slight girl's breasts, sharp-pointing and firm. But Rosalind's neck was completely grown up; a woman's neck, honey-white and full.

She smiled at him as he came, and held out her long, honey-white hand.

"You don't remember me a bit," he said.

"I do. You're Arnold Waterlow. You were at Winifred's birthday party, years ago. You were the nice man I sat beside. You listened when I played."

"Didn't the others listen?"

"Not like you. I broke down in the 'Kreutzer Sonata' and I cried. And you were kind to me. Do you remember?"

"I've never forgotten. We went together to hear Schüller play, and Winifred was angry because we didn't like him."

"I remember. And you wanted to come to Leipzig."

"Yes. And you said you'd be back in three years' time. I waited for you and you didn't come. You kept me waiting five years."

"I kept myself waiting. But it was worth it. I can play the 'Kreutzer' now without breaking down and crying. I shall play it to you some day by yourself."

"Will you, really?"

"Yes. Because you were kind to me."

And to Arnold it was as if she said, "Not because I like you better than anybody else, but because you were kind to me and I remember. For my own sake, you understand, not yours."

Perhaps she was going to marry Wilfrid or Albert. That was his horrible thought.

Then Goodwin, the 'cellist, came and claimed her.

"Are you going to play the 'Kreutzer Sonata'?" he said.

"The seven years aren't up yet."

"The seven years?"

"You said you'd hear me in seven years' time."

"I shall hear you now. You will play it to-night, please."

And Rosalind with Winifred played the "Kreutzer Sonata."

She stood up, straight and tall, beating out the measure with her foot; her head leaned sideways, listening for the music that was to come. Then she lifted her bow and began to play, swaying slightly, so that her body seemed to play, holding the music and shaken by it, pouring it out of itself. And as she played, to Arnold she was a child again, the child wandering in the enchanted wood, playing to herself, listening to herself, unaware of them, unaware that they were listening. Only when she came to the passage where she had broken down five years ago, she lifted her eyes and looked at Arnold and smiled. And it was as if she had said, "You remember? It was here. But listen to me now." And calmly, triumphantly, with the ease of a bird flying through still air, she played through the terrible passage. She played with an exquisite precision and rhythm and technique (he supposed that was what you ought to say about her); with all that they had taught her at Leipzig, and with something of her own, something pure, a sacred, unearthly fire, a sort of white radiance, but without passion. Innocently, like an enchanted child, she played. She hadn't waked up yet. She was still dreaming in her wood. If only he could wake her!

The next day, which was a Saturday, they went for a walk through the cornfields and round Vinings lake. Black steel, with little glassy silver ripples, the lake lay between the long rows of willows. On the farther side a green meadow sloped up to Vinings. The water and the meadow had a still, shining beauty, and the beauty of Rosalind moved on it, from tree to tree, still and shining, carved out from the water and the meadow by sheets of thin air. Arnold walked in front with Rosalind, Wilfrid and Winifred followed them, and Mr. and Mrs. Godden went behind. Arnold was alone with Rosalind.

She talked to him, about Leipzig, about her masters there, about the concerts she was going to play at in the provinces, in Gloucester, her own town, in Birmingham and Worcester, Leeds and Manchester and Liverpool. She was to go with Goodwin and his String Quartette.

"Then," she said, "I shall come to London and you'll hear me."

And she asked him what he had been doing all those five years. He told her.

"Reading," she said, "always reading? Reading about dreadful things that I can't understand."

"You could, you could," he protested. He almost made himself believe it.

"Oh no, I couldn't. I'm not clever, like you. You don't want me to understand?"

"I want you to be yourself."

"Such a stupid self——"

"It isn't. And if it was I shouldn't want it to be different."

"It never will be."

"I'm glad it won't."

"But you don't know what it's really like," she said.

"I think I do. It's very like what it was five years ago ; only a little more grown-up."

"I should hope it was. I don't want to be a horrid little prodigy. That's why I didn't come back. Please remember that I'm grown up."

"Do I behave as if I didn't?"

"Sometimes, a little. I think it's because you're so awfully clever. But I'm nineteen, you know."

"It sounds as if I were awfully stupid."

"Oh no ; but you were grown up when I was a child ; I must always seem frightfully young to you. So I just remind you."

"But I'm not so frightfully old. ²⁵Twenty-five's young, too, you know."

"Yes, it is, isn't it? I'm glad you're young. Albert's shockingly old, so's Wilfrid."

He laughed. He had been afraid she was going to marry Albert or Wilfrid. He wondered, "Why did she say she's glad I'm young?" Then he knew ; she had said it because she was so young herself, because she hadn't waked up yet. She wasn't really aware of herself or him or the possibility of his being in love with her. She was only talking to him in her dream.

But you were near waking when you talked in your dreams.

She stopped and let the others come up with them, Wilfrid and Winifred with her sharp, watching face.

"What's the matter with you, Winny?" Rosalind said.

"You look as if you'd seen a ghost."

"I haven't seen anything ; there's nothing the matter with me," said Winifred.

And he saw that she knew he loved Rosalind, and she was frightened. He thought it was because Rosalind was her friend and she was afraid he would take her away from her ; she didn't want Rosalind to love him, she wanted to keep her for herself. It was silly of Winifred not to see that some day Rosalind must fall in love with somebody ; and if she fell in love with him, what difference could it make to Winifred ?

Rosalind didn't talk to him any more that day. And on Monday she went back to Gloucester, to her own people.

In November, Rosalind came again to London. She gave a recital in Steinway Hall on a Wednesday evening and Arnold went to it with the Goddens.

The little hall was packed tight, after the success of Wednesday afternoon. Arnold sat between Winifred and Wilfrid, and Winifred kept on showing him the professionals among the audience. He thought : " I wish she'd keep quiet."

Then Rosalind came on to the platform, and there was a loud burst of clapping. And Arnold thought, "*Now* she'll be different."

But no, she wasn't. She bowed to the clapping with a sweet little surprised and awkward shyness, and Arnold wondered whether Wilfrid and Winifred could hear the frightful thumping of his heart. It sounded loud in the silence while they waited for Rosalind to play.

He had spent pounds on a bunch of roses, bought at an expensive shop in Regent Street. The joy of choosing them was heightened by the knowledge that he had been reckless, that he couldn't afford those roses. They would be handed up to her before the ten minutes' interval.

Rosalind had begun. Would she be different now, after her success, playing before all these people ? No. She was playing as she had played in the Goddens' drawing-room, dreamily, to herself, as if nobody was there. She played the "Schlummerlied" and "Träumerei" of Schumann, the "Romance" by the composer whose name Arnold had forgotten, the "Mazurka," all the things she had played at Winifred's birthday-party.

"Can you remember, Arnold ?" Winifred whispered. "You can see how she's come on."

Oh yes, he could see it.

"She was best in the Brahms," Winifred whispered.

Yes, she was best in the Brahms ; but of all the things she

played that evening, what he liked best and remembered were the things she had played five years ago at Winifred's birthday party.

After the "Mazurka," the bunches of flowers were handed up to Rosalind. Lots of bunches. She took them with a shy surprise, like a child receiving a birthday present, a better birthday present than it had expected. Arnold's roses went up last of all. Rosalind turned and read his name on the card. He saw her smile to herself, secretly, not as she had smiled when she took the others, and when she came on to the platform again after the interval it was his roses that she carried. His, out of all those bunches. She looked at him and smiled over the tops of the roses.

She was holding them, stroking her face with them as if she loved them, when they came to her afterwards in the artists' room.

"I love yours best of all," she said. "It was sweet of you to give them to me. Smell." And he bent his face where her face had been.

"Was it all right, Winny?" she said in a funny casual voice.

"It was tremendous."

"Nonsense! A few people in a little hall. But" (lest she should seem to scorn them) "they were dears. They did listen."

"I meant your playing."

"I only just got through by the skin of my teeth. I was shaking in my shoes, half the time."

"It *was* tremendous, wasn't it, Arnold?"

It was. But Rosalind was the same. With all her tremendousness she hadn't waked up yet.

He thought, I mustn't wake her up until I can marry her. Perhaps next year Mr. Godden would raise his salary.

Going home from Ilford station in the dark where the trees stood out in the path, he steered her with his hand on her arm.

She kept close to him, turning her dim face to his.

"I'm glad you came," she said. "I should have gone to pieces if you hadn't been there."

"What did I do? What could I do?"

"You kept me together."

"How?"

"I don't know how. But I was playing to you all the time. Didn't you know I was playing to you?"

"No. Of course I didn't."

" I was. I always pick one face out of the crowd to play to it."

" But why me ? "

" Because you've got the kind of face I like playing to. That's why I made you sit in the front row. So that I could see you."

" No ? You didn't, really ? "

" Really. And when I was frightened I just looked at you and I felt all right again. I shall always feel all right when I look at you. There's something funny about you. I shall always want to have you there when I'm playing."

" Shall you ? I say, I'm awfully glad. But I don't understand it."

" No more do I."

XXVII

BUT Mr. Godden didn't raise his salary next year, nor yet the next. And it was two years before Rosalind came again to London. She hadn't given any more recitals, for she was not yet satisfied with what she had done ; she was holding herself back and working, waiting till she was better, better still, waiting till she was perfect before she appeared again in public. She went back to Leipzig for six months and studied there, and when she came to London in eighteen ninety she meant to stay there. She was twenty-one, and her people let her do what she liked now. So Rosalind lived in rooms in Tavistock Square with a woman friend.

Arnold saw her many times that year at the Goddens' house, and many times he walked with her through the fields by Vinings lake and over Wanstead Flats to the river Roding. She was beautiful in the fields, moving as if to the rhythm of music that she heard in her head, tall and swaying slightly like a young tree stirred by the wind. They went alone, and at any moment he could have told her that he loved her ; but one by one the moments passed and he had not told her. He still thought it would be dishonourable to wake her up before he knew that he could marry her ; and as long as Mr. Godden didn't raise his salary, how could he ?

Perhaps he never could. He wasn't going to wake her up all for nothing ; he couldn't expect her to wait for him for ever. And surely she must know that he loved her. No man could behave with his peculiar foolishness unless he were in love. But knowing it didn't seem to wake her. She wouldn't wake till he had her in his arms. If only he could hold her, now this minute, under the willow tree by the river ; if only he could see her coming up out of her dream, her sweet face quivering and flushing. But she was always white and calm.

Three times she came to tea with Wilfrid and Winifred at

Arnold's mother's house, and once she dined there alone. He could see his mother disapproved of Rosalind because she played the violin, which Mrs. Waterlow regarded as a man's instrument, and because she played it in public. Mrs. Waterlow thought that a girl who fiddled in public couldn't be quite nice; it was like being an actress, making an exhibition of yourself before people, on a platform, for money. "Surely you don't approve of that, Arnold?"

"Why shouldn't I approve of it?" It might have been a from of prostitution the way she went on about it.

"Well," said his mother with a dreadful cunning, "you wouldn't like your *wife* to play in public, would you?"

"Of course I would if she played like Linda."

"Linda, indeed! Does she call you Arnold?"

"She does."

"I hope you're not going to get entangled with that girl. I can see she's trying to get hold of you."

"You think everybody's trying to get hold of me. Once it was poor Winifred."

His mother was trying as usual to draw out his secret.

"What am I to think if she goes calling you Arnold?"

"I can't marry all the people who call me Arnold."

"I should never forgive you if you married Rosalind Verney. I'd rather see you in your coffin."

"Time enough to talk about coffins when I've done it, mother."

He could feel her mind worrying at him, trying to tear out his secret. Not that she really thought he would marry Rosalind Verney; she couldn't believe he would do anything so awful. It was like her not believing that he really wanted to go to the Goddens.

Then—it was in the summer of eighteen ninety—the Goddens gave another evening party. It was not the great affair that Winifred's birthday party had been seven years ago. They had only half a dozen people, beside the musicians. Elise Neumann and Goodwin and Rosalind were there. And there, standing up by the piano and talking to Linda, was a young man whom Arnold had not seen before.

A most extraordinary and beautiful young man. A young man with the face of a strong, handsome girl, the pink colour not flushing it but spread firmly, as if hardened into the tissue, and delicately bronzed. He had a handsome nose, a straight line of smooth bone, jutting, lifted slightly at the tip; a hand-

some, well carved mouth, wide and rather thick and sensuous ; blue-grey eyes with a thin glassy film over them like tears. A face that looked as if it were blown on by a high wind, the hair swept back from the big forehead in a shining golden mass, smooth and solid and metallic, hanging to the base of his neck. He wore a brown velveteen coat and grey trousers, both shabby.

The sight of this young man, in his frightful beauty, was agony to Arnold.

Rosalind had seen him, her eyes signalled to him across the room.

"This is my friend," she said, "Max Schoonhoven. Max, this is Arnold Waterlow."

Max Schoonhoven bowed from his hips with a jerk, then flung his head back to keep his hair hanging properly.

"Max is a great pianist," she said. "He's going to play to us."

"Per-haps," said Max.

"Of course you're going to play."

"If you say of course, then of course I play. For *you*."

His voice, his whole manner had a naïf, innocent irony, a child's irony.

"Mr. Waterlow is a musician ? " He seemed to state it, to take it for granted.

"No," said Arnold, "I wish I were."

"No ? " said Max, still with his faint, childish irony.

"He loves music, Max."

"Ah ? He loves music. Then he will like to hear me play. And you," he added ; but you could see it was an after-thought.

"Oh, he's heard me so often that it's ceased to be exciting, hasn't it, Arnold ? "

"No," said Arnold. He said it abruptly, savagely, enraged by Schoonhoven's naïveté.

"I hope, then," said Schoonhoven, "that I shall excite you."

"You probably will."

He would : to anger, contempt, fury, to murderous madness. He would have liked to have killed Schoonhoven that instant as he stood there with his false air of innocence, smiling.

Then Goodwin came with Elise Neumann, and Rosalind introduced Schoonhoven and left him with them. She moved down the room to two empty chairs. Arnold sat beside her.

"You're cross," she said. "I don't like you when you're cross."

"I'm not cross. Why should I be ? "

" I don't know why. But you don't like my Max."

" I don't know him."

" No. You don't know him. I want you to know him. I want you to like him."

" Why should I ? "

" Because he's my friend, and he's a genius. And because he's poor and struggling and doesn't know anybody but me."

" Where did you find him, Linda ? "

" In an attic above my rooms in Tavistock Square."

" But—how—how ? "

" How did I get to know him if he doesn't know anybody ? Is that what you mean ? "

" Yes."

" It was quite simple. I heard him playing on such a poor old cracked, worn-out piano. And I ran up and asked him to come down and play on mine when I wasn't there. And then, sometimes I *was* there. And he played to me. Then we played together. *Now* you see."

Oh yes. Now he saw.

" And you're going to like him ? " she said.

" I'm not sure."

" Oh, you haven't heard him play yet."

Then he played. And as he played all his childish irony, his false naïveté, went from him. He was simple and great, he was innocent and pure, you couldn't hate him. Under your eyes, as he played, his sensuous face became clear and spiritual, incredibly refined.

That night he played nothing but Chopin : an Étude, a Valse, a Mazurka, a Nocturne. The music played itself again in his face, his sensitive, beautiful subtly changing face. He *was* the music that he played ; he was the sadness, the rushing joy, the passion, the infinite dream. He sat very still, in a divine simplicity, without gesture, doing it all with his strong, delicate hands, his wonderful fingers. He was like Rosalind ; he played to himself, as if he were all alone, alone in the room, alone in the universe, by himself, Max Schoonhoven ; he didn't know that they were there.

He had finished. There was clapping and a shouting of applause. He rose and bowed gravely, almost sternly, as if he rebuked their clamour. When Rosalind spoke to him, he smiled, an enchanting smile. And Rosalind turned to Arnold.

" Wasn't he divine ? " she said.

He couldn't answer.

Next Saturday Arnold had tea with Rosalind in her rooms in Tavistock Square. You went up two flights of stairs to the top storey. Rosalind's room was at the front, looking out between blue curtains on to the green trees of the square. There was a wide blue divan in the corner, with black cushions, and purple and orange cushions, flung on it anyhow, and a big blue chair by the fireplace where Rosalind sat waiting for him. On the wall facing the fireplace there was a great bare, clean space.

"You've come," she said.

"Did you think I wouldn't?"

"One never knows. But yes, I did know."

"Of course you knew. Is anybody else coming?"

"Max may look in for tea, and Mary Unwin; but they'll go again."

"Who's Mary Unwin?"

"The friend I live with. She's a dear."

"Does she take care of you?"

"Yes. Ever so much. When she's here."

She told him that Mary Unwin was a typist in somebody's office and there were long periods, the best part of all the week-days, when she wasn't there, when he could only suppose that Rosalind and Max Schoonhoven were alone.

"What are you looking so sad about?"

"I don't like it, Linda."

"What don't you like?"

"Your being alone so much."

"Oh, but I'm not alone. There's Max."

"Do you see a lot of him?"

"Quite a lot. What do you think, he's going to play at my concert next month. He can't take a hall by himself, so he's coming in with me."

"He's jolly lucky."

"I'm jolly lucky to get him. Do you know what he's doing now?"

"No. How should I know?"

"Oh, how you hate the poor thing! He's composing. A duet for violin and piano."

"And you play it with him?"

"Yes, bit by bit as he writes it off. It takes up a lot of time, but, oh, Arnold, it's so exciting! . . . I think it must be tea-time. Yes, it's twenty past four. You might light the gas-ring. I can't stand the plop it makes."

He lit the gas-ring and put the kettle on it.

"Now you may cut the bread and butter, if you like."

He cut the bread and butter.

They sat together on the divan, watching the kettle boil, and she told him what she was doing and what she was going to do. He was beginning to feel happy ; for ten heavenly minutes she hadn't once mentioned Max Schoonhoven.

But when tea was ready she went outside to the foot of the attic stairs and began calling, "Max! Max! *Tea!*" She came back and stood in the doorway, with her head on one side, listening.

"He isn't coming," she said. "He's too busy."

She went away and came back with a little tray ; she took a white cloth out of a drawer in the dresser and set a cup and saucer on it and plates of cake and bread and butter.

"What happens now ? " he said.

"I'm going to take Max's tea up to him."

"I say, you oughtn't to do that. Why can't he come for it himself ? "

"Because it would disturb him. I take it up and I open his door very softly, and I pop the tray down on the floor and shut the door again, without a word. I have to be as quiet as a mouse. He just hears the opening and shutting of the door. And he has his tea without being annoyed by it."

"Why doesn't he make his own tea ? "

"Max make his own tea ? He can't make anything—except music."

"How about his breakfast and his lunch and his dinner ? " he said when he had carried the tray upstairs for her and they had come down again.

"Either he comes for them or I take them up." .

"I see. You wait on him."

"He wouldn't get anything to eat if I didn't. He's nothing but a big, helpless baby."

"Can't he go to restaurants like other people ? "

"No, he can't. He hasn't got any money. He can't do anything like other people."

"He lets you feed him ? "

"I don't let him starve. Would you ? "

"No. I suppose I wouldn't."

"Well—what would you think of me if I let him starve ? "

... I must go and tell Mary tea's ready."

"Oh—*must* you ? "

"Yes, the poor darlings must have their teas. You are a

selfish thing. You want to sit there and have it all to yourself, don't you ? ”

“ I want to have you all to myself.”

“ So you shall. Mary won't stay, bless you.”

She was rapping at the door of the back room and calling “ Mary ! ” He could hear Mary's voice answering and presently she came in.

He fell in liking with Mary Unwin at first sight. She had a plain, sweet, brown face, smooth brown hair, parted and braided, a thin, sweet mouth and very dark eyes, serious and kind. She looked at Arnold as if she were going to like him, as if he were a person she had long wanted to know.

“ I'm glad you've come,” she said. “ I've heard so much about you. From Linda.”

And suddenly he was happy again. “ Does Linda talk about me ? ”

“ Of course I do. Didn't you know that ? ”

“ No,” he said foolishly. His sudden happiness made him shy and foolish.

“ You don't mind, do you ? ” Mary Unwin said.

“ It depends on what she says.”

“ And that you'll never know,” said Linda. “ Doesn't it depend on who I say it to ? . . . I must go and see if Max has put his cup outside his door.”

“ I'll go,” said Arnold.

“ No, you won't. You'll stay here and talk to Mary.”

He was alone with Mary Unwin.

“ Yes,” said Mary, as if he had spoken ; “ she oughtn't to. That was what you were thinking, wasn't it ? ”

“ Yes.” And then he said abruptly, “ Do you like Schoonhoven ? ”

Mary smiled very gently and shook her head. She wasn't going to say it out loud.

Arnold lowered his voice. “ How long has he been here ? ”

“ About five weeks.”

“ I wish he'd go.”

“ So do I. But he won't, he won't.” She made a warning sign. Linda had come back with the cup.

Mary Unwin was staring at the clean space on the wall-paper.

“ Linda,” she said, “ what's become of the piano ? ”

“ It's gone upstairs to Max.”

“ My dear—— And what are you going to do ? ”

"Get another one," said Linda. "It's no use looking at me like that, Mary. He's got to have one."

"You'd give him the clothes off your back if he could wear them," Mary said.

She finished her tea quickly and went back to her room.

"Isn't she a darling?" Linda said. "She's perfect to live with. She simply sits there in a heavenly peace, as if she had some tremendous secret. . . . Did she tell you she didn't like Max?"

"Oh, come, that isn't fair."

"Well, she doesn't. She doesn't understand him."

"I don't either. How long is he going to stay here?"

"As long as he has to."

"Sponging on you, I suppose."

"What a horrible word——"

"Well, what is it?"

"What is it? It's doing what I want him to do. Being nice and letting me help him."

"He oughtn't to let you."

"Wouldn't you?"

"No. I'd starve first."

"How horrid of you! As if money mattered."

"He takes your money then?"

"Oh—Arnold! You shan't talk about him."

"God knows I don't want to."

"There's only one thing. The more I help him the sooner he'll go. He's only here because he can't afford to go anywhere else."

He stayed for an hour, talking in uneasy fits with long silences between. If this was coming to see Rosalind——

At the end she tried to make up for it.

"Don't be unhappy, Arnold. It's all right. Me and Max, you know."

He left, wondering what she meant. Did she mean that there was nothing between her and that fellow Schoonhoven? Did she mean that it was he whom she cared for, and not Max? Or did she mean—did she mean that there was something between them, only it hadn't gone so far as he might think it had, not far enough to make him unhappy? What did she think he thought?

It was an evening at Rosalind's. Arnold sat on the divan while Linda played to him. They were alone together. She

had promised that some day she would play to him by himself. She played a tender, happy music that stirred his heart quietly ; she seemed to be saying tender, happy things to him there by himself, and every now and then she smiled at him over the neck of her fiddle as if she said, " It's all right, Arnold. I love you. Don't you hear me saying I love you ? "

He was utterly at peace.

And then, suddenly, in the middle of it, Max Schoonhoven came in. He came softly, in deference to the music, and he didn't speak. He stood leaning up against the piano (Linda had got another instead of the one he had taken), and he watched till the last tender, happy phrase was ended. Then he darted forward, quickly, lest Linda should begin again.

" Are we not to have our rehearsal then ? " he said.

" Of course, Max. We'll have it now, this minute."

He looked at Arnold and threw back his head with arrogance.

" I didn't know that anybody was to be here."

" Arnold isn't just anybody."

But Schoonhoven was sulky.

" We have always rehearsed alone," he said.

" And now we'll rehearse for Arnold. He'll like it."

" You do not ask me whether I shall like it."

He was a spoiled child, sulking at the party.

" It's all right, Max. You can forget he's there."

" Yes, please do," Arnold said.

Max scowled at him with unsurpassable candour.

" I shall certainly not remember you. It doesn't matter to me whether you are there or not."

" Then why are you so cross about it ? " said Linda.

" I am not cross. But when I am told that we shall be alone I expect that we shall be alone. And I wish each time to be as it was before."

" No time can be exactly as it was before. Sit over there, Arnold. We're going to play the ' Kreutzer Sonata.' "

Schoonhoven, suddenly appeased, had seated himself at the piano with an air of simplicity.

And they played the " Kreutzer Sonata."

Would he ever forget that playing ? He had never heard anything like it, never heard anything like Schoonhoven, like Rosalind as she played with him. No : he had never heard Linda play before. Something had waked her up. She knew the secret of that music. The white radiance and the innocence were gone. Schoonhoven at the piano was beating out a dark,

sensual splendour, he played with a mingled ecstasy and majesty of passion. He was putting something into the Andante that was not there. His passion went out to him into Rosalind and possessed her ; they called to each other and answered, a passionate violin to a passionate piano ; they closed in the Finale and ran together in a divine joy and exultation.

Arnold, curled up on the divan, listened in agony. Would the damned thing never stop ? There were poignant sounds that cut a him like knives ; heavy, yearning phrases that pressed on his heart and made it heave to their own rhythm ; he could feel its tight strain as he waited for the returning pressure of the phrase. It came again and again, the sharp cry of the violin above the rolling beat of the piano, Schoonhoven playing nobly, purifying himself as he played.

And through it all he heard the moaning of his mind. Something's waked her up. Schoonhoven's waked her.

God, how he hated him !

It was over. Rosalind was playing alone. Three sudden chords, the quick scurrying of bright sounds, and then a song, sweet and complaining, that lost itself and came again and again, jetting up out of the downward shower that covered it. You waited, longing for it to come again ; but it delayed ; it held itself back, it broke and scattered. At last it gathered itself together and came back ; it rose clear and pure, going alone ; then suddenly it was dashed from treble to bass, and sank, hidden under the scurrying shower. It fell, dying on a deep chord. You knew all the time it was on that chord it would die.

"What do you think of *that* ?" said Linda.

"What was it ?"

"Max's 'Fantasy in A Minor.'"

Max, in a child-like ecstasy, was crooning his song, marking the rhythm with one hand.

"It is all right," said Max, "my Fantasy. It goes. After Beethoven."

In the evening of that day Arnold sat alone with Winifred in the Goddens' back garden. They talked about Linda.

"She never played like that before," he said. "Something's waked her up."

"Yes, something's waked her up."

"What do you think it is, Winny ?"

Winifred's eyes blinked at him behind their glasses. She didn't answer.

"Do you think it's Schoonhoven?"

"I don't know, Arnold. I don't think it is. I think——"

"What do you think?"

She gave him a long look. "Do you love Linda?" she said.

"Yes."

"Have you told her?"

"No."

"She knows. I think that's waked her."

"I don't. I think she's in love with Schoonhoven."

"No. Not yet. She's only sorry for him. He's dreadful, Arnold. He looks so simple and innocent, and he isn't a bit. He lives on her. She keeps him. She pays his rent. He takes her money. And because he's a genius, Linda says it doesn't matter. She's in love with his genius, if you like."

"Do you suppose he cares for her?"

"I don't think Schoonhoven could care much for anybody but himself."

"It seems to me," said Arnold, "that Max wants kicking very badly."

"That's what Wilfrid says. You mustn't let her fall in love with him."

"How am I to stop her?"

Winifred's face was fixed in a look of sudden, sacred exaltation, the look that goes before the rush into danger.

"Tell her you love her."

"I can't tell her, Winny. I can't marry her. I don't make enough to marry anybody on."

"Don't you?"

Again that determined, sacrificial look. "I'll speak to father."

The next day Mr. Godden called him into his office. "What's all this," he said, "about you and Linda?"

"Did Winifred tell you, sir?"

"Well, she seems to think you want to marry Linda."

"I can't marry her, sir."

"You would if you could? And you could if I raised your salary?"

"Yes, if she'll have me."

"I don't think, Arnold, that you'd be happy with Linda."

"I shan't be happy without her, sir."

"Of course you think so. You're really in love this time."

And I suppose you think I ought to raise your salary at once and give you my blessing, do you? Well, I'm not going to. I'd have raised it this quarter if I hadn't guessed what was the matter with you. But I'm not going to help you to marry Linda, yet. You must wait a year."

"I've waited seven years already."

"You don't mean to say this began seven years ago? Why, she was a mere child."

"Isn't seven years long enough?"

"Yes. If you'd been seeing each other all the time. I'll raise your salary in a year, and you shall marry her then, if you still want to."

"Then I shall ask her now."

"Very well. Ask her. If she cares for you she'll wait a year. You won't be rushed into it."

That was all he got out of Mr. Godden.

XXVIII

It was on a Sunday evening ; Linda had sent for him and he had found her alone.

Max, she said, was having supper with the Goodwins and Mary had gone.

"Gone ?" he said. "You don't mean really gone ?"

"Really gone."

"I thought she was looking after you ?"

"So did I."

"Why did she go ?"

Linda smiled. "She couldn't stand Max and I couldn't stand her not standing him. She's a darling, but she had to go."

He couldn't explain it to himself, but he felt that Mary's going was a disaster, as if without her Linda wasn't safe from Max Schoonhoven. He must make her safe. That was what Winifred had meant.

They had supper together, and after supper she played to him. She played Max Schoonhoven's "Fantasy in A Minor."

Suddenly she broke off in the middle of the complaining and returning song.

"Arnold, you're not listening. What is it ? Don't you want me to play to you ?"

"No, not now. I want to talk to you."

"Very well, you shall talk. I don't know that I want to play."

She came to him where he sat on the divan.

"What is it ?" she said again.

"You know."

"Yes. I know. You came to tell me you hate Max."

"I didn't. I came to tell you I love you."

"Oh—Arnold——"

Her body slackened ; she stooped forward, defenceless, staring at her loose hands lying in the hollow of her skirt, between her knees.

He took her and held her to him, close, binding down her arms with his, covering her mouth with his. For one instant her head lay still on his shoulder. She raised it and he could feel the tightening resistance of her body.

"Don't!" she said. "Don't. I mustn't let you kiss me. It'll make you think I love you."

"You do love me."

"I wanted to——"

"And you did."

"Yes. I did. I do. Only—it's Max. Oh, Arnold, I love him so frightfully!"

And Linda began to cry.

She struggled and he let go; but instead of breaking loose from him, she threw her arms round his neck and clung to him crying.

"Poor little thing! Poor little Linda! But you don't love him."

"I do. I do."

"How can you love him when you love me?"

"Because there are two Lindas; a nice good one who loves *you*, and an awful one who loves Max, and she's more me than the other one. . . . He's got such a stunning face."

"I know my face can't compete with his."

"I adore your face. Your darling face. And I love your voice and the way you look at me; and when you touch me I love it. I'm always happy with you, and I'm not always happy with Max. Sometimes I'm afraid of him."

"And you want to marry him?"

"Max doesn't want to marry me. At least, not yet. He wants to be free."

"What do you think you're going to do then?"

"I don't know. If Max asked me to go away with him I suppose I'd go."

"Good God! Linda—you *must* marry me. I couldn't ask you before because I haven't got enough money. Next year I shall have more. But it won't be much."

"That wouldn't matter. Max hasn't anything. But father will go on giving me two hundred a year till I make it. So it would have been all right. If it wasn't for Max—— Arnold, it's his playing. You can't think what it's like when we're playing together. It's like being joined so tight to him that I can't get away. Every time we go clean out of ourselves into each other, and it's heaven."

"It doesn't last. And when it's over?"

"Then you remember what it was like."

She sat still, staring again at her hands lying loose in her lap, as if she remembered.

"I suppose I ought to say I'd rather you didn't love me. But I want you to love me. I want to feel you're there, loving me."

"I shall always be there, loving you."

She called him back as he was going. "Arnold—you ought to marry Winifred."

"Winifred?"

"Yes. She's worth ten of me and she's in love with you."

"You oughtn't to say that. It isn't true."

"It is."

"How do you know?"

"Everybody knows but you. Her mother told me. I think she thought it would keep me off you. She said it had been going on for years."

"How many years?"

"Ever since she was fifteen. She tried to hide it, but she couldn't. She was too young when it began."

"I'm sorry. I didn't know."

So that was Winifred's secret. How he must have hurt her, all those years! He wondered if she had been hurt as he was hurt now.

"Why did you tell me? I wish you hadn't."

"I thought it was time you knew it. You should have loved Winifred, not me."

"I can't love anybody but you, Linda. Look here—you *said* you were happy with me. And you're afraid of him. That's because you know he can't love you."

"Yes, he can."

"Why do you love him if you're afraid of him?"

"I'm afraid of him because I love him."

"You won't be happy with him."

"I don't care if I'm not. I want something more than happiness."

"Can't I give you what you want?"

She smiled. "Perhaps. But I don't know, Arnold. And I do know Max can. And it isn't only what I told you. It's—it's partly because he's so helpless, so dependent on me. He's like my child. He wants me to take care of him. And you don't. You want to take care of me."

" Yes. I've always wanted to take care of you."

" And that's not what I want. So you see—— "

When he said good-bye, she put up her arms and drew his face down to hers and kissed it.

" You can do that—— And yet—— "

" And yet. Oh, Arnold—darling—are you very unhappy ? "

" It doesn't matter if I am. I'm like you, I want something more than happiness."

He walked with Winifred under the lime-trees in the avenue. She had waited for him there. Her queer, plain face lightened as he came to her.

It hurt him to see her, knowing her poor secret. God, what a world it was. *What* a world !

" Did you see her last night ? " she said.

" Yes. I saw her."

" Is it all right ? "

" No. It's all wrong. She won't have me."

" Oh, Arnold, dear—— "

" I've waited for her seven years, Winny ; and I'm just seven weeks too late. She's in love with Schoonhoven."

" Arnold, are you sure. She loved *you*. I know she loved you."

" How do you know ? "

" She couldn't not love you."

" She says she does love me. But she loves Schoonhoven more."

" What makes her ? "

" It's some hold he's got, some beastly fascination. She owned she was afraid of him. She says he doesn't want to marry her."

" Then she'll come back. He'll leave her and she'll come to you. She'll find him out. He'll give himself away."

" If only I could have married her seven weeks ago ! "

" If only you could ! What did father say about your salary ? "

" He said he'd raise it next year. He was awfully good. But it's too late."

" I believe he'd do it now, Arnold, if he knew."

And that was what Mr. Godden did do. Whether he relented, or whether he was frightened and thought that Linda would go off with Schoonhoven, he made Arnold his head clerk with a salary of two hundred and fifty a year. He said it was because

Curtis, his manager, had set up a business of his own and he was putting Simpson, the old clerk, into his place. But he advised Arnold to go to Linda and ask her again.

"She may know herself better by this time," he said.

Arnold called at Tavistock Square the next day, which was a Sunday. The landlady came to the door. Miss Verney wasn't in, she said; Miss Verney had gone away.

"Gone away? Where to?"

The landlady wasn't sure, but she thought it was Paris. Anyhow, she'd gone.

"When did she go?" Arnold's voice sounded like another man's, hoarse and strange.

Linda had gone last Friday. She hadn't left any address, but the landlady thought perhaps Miss Unwin might tell him something. Miss Unwin lived at 25, Gordon Street.

He went to Miss Unwin.

He found her sitting in a dingy, shabby room. She started as he came in and looked troubled. Something had disturbed Mary's heavenly peace.

"I wondered if you'd come," she said. "You've heard?"

"About Linda? Yes. She's gone to Paris, hasn't she?"

"Yes."

"Do you know what she's gone for?"

"Gone for? She's gone off with Max Schoonhoven. . . . It's no use, Mr. Waterlow, you can't stop her. She wanted to get away from all of us, and she's got away."

"If I went after her, do you think I could bring her back?"

"No, my dear man, I don't. Nothing will bring Linda back. She meant to do this and she's done it. She's had the decency to go away to do it, that's all."

"You don't mean to say you think——"

"Think what?"

"That he's her lover?"

"Do you see Max Schoonhoven not taking everything he could get?"

"Good God—you think it's *that*?"

"I'm sure of it. Do you see Linda not giving everything? She'll give, give, give, till there's nothing left to give. She'd give him everything he wanted."

"What makes you so sure?"

"You'd better know the worst. She told me. She told me to tell you. She's absolutely honest about it. The poor darling

said I was to ask you to forgive her. She said you'd understand."

"Oh yes, I understand. That was what she was trying to tell me, then."

"Very likely."

"Did she tell you I'd asked her to marry me?"

"No. But I thought you would. I'm so sorry."

There was a long, agonising silence.

"If it had been anybody but Schoonhoven!" she said at last.

"I know. He'll hurt her. He'll make her unhappy."

"He'll tear her to bits. There'll be nothing left of her when she comes out of it."

"Will she ever come out of it?"

"Yes. She'll come out. She'll come back when he's left her."

"The brute. The damned brute!"

"Would you marry her if she came back?"

"Of course I'd marry her."

"It makes no difference to you, what she's done?"

"Nothing Linda could do would make any difference to me."

"I wouldn't have told you if I'd thought it would."

She paused. She seemed to pass away from him, to sink back into her peace. Her voice came to him quietly, out of her peace.

"You won't let yourself go to pieces over this, will you?"

"Not if I can help it."

"You can. You've got to think of Linda."

"I am thinking of her."

"I know. And it hurts you to think; it's nothing but pain now. But the pain doesn't last for ever. I know it doesn't. Some day you'll come out of it into peace. Then you can help Linda. I don't believe she's gone so very far from you. You must be there when she comes back."

Mary Unwin walked with him to Gower Street station. Her last words were, "Remember you're going to wait till Linda comes back."

Yes. That was what he was going to do. He felt calmer after he had seen Mary Unwin. For a moment she had taken him up out of his misery and held him in her heavenly peace. Linda was right. She had some tremendous secret. But he didn't think that he would ever learn it. He remembered his Spinoza: "He who loves God cannot endeavour that God should love him in return."

Then the love of God was not like the love of a woman.

Or wasn't it? Wasn't that precisely what he had to learn, that he couldn't love Linda, any more than he could love God, till he had left off endeavouring that she should love him in return, till he had given up himself? Was that Mary Unwin's tremendous secret?

She had said that he was to go and see her again. Some day he would go.

XXIX

THE peace that Mary had given him didn't last. It was some effect of her presence, and to get it again he would have to go to her. But at first he couldn't go. He was afraid of everybody who knew Rosalind ; he was afraid of the Goddens ; not because they made him think of Rosalind ; for everything made him think of her, she was never out of his mind ; he was afraid of their consciousness of Rosalind, their knowledge of what had happened to him.

None of the Goddens had as yet said anything to him about Rosalind's departure, and he couldn't make out whether they knew that she was with Schoonhoven, or whether, without knowing, they wondered and suspected. Perhaps they kept quiet for fear of hurting him, since it was evident that *his* affair hadn't gone well. He couldn't eat, he couldn't sleep, he grew white and thin, he couldn't hide his unhappiness.

The image of Rosalind never left him ; it came between him and the sunlight, it hung before him on the darkness of the night. He saw her as she stood in the Goddens' drawing-room, waiting for him to come to her ; he saw her as she walked beside him over the field grass ; he saw her turn her beautiful head to speak to him ; the music that she made streamed through his memory. He could feel the clinging of her arms about his neck and the pressure of her head on his shoulder. His unreal self went about walking and talking, it ate and drank, dressed and undressed mechanically ; it sat in an office, and a dry, abstract part of it was busy with pounds and shillings and pence, while his real self was possessed by the image of Rosalind.

The living Rosalind had not had more power. She stood in her own space and her own time, enclosed in her body ; she was separate from him and distinct. The image of Rosalind moved in another space and in another time and in the secret places of his mind ; it was subtle and penetrating, it covered

all his thought, it was closer to him than thinking, it was a part of him as the living Rosalind had never been. Going to her and coming from her he had been gloriously aware of the strength and hardness of his body; when he was with her his strength and hardness went from him; he had been appeased by the sight of her, and by the sound of her voice even when it told him that she loved Schoonhoven. But when he thought of her he hated his hardness and his strength. They were no good to him since he couldn't have her. The living Rosalind had moved him to a tenderness that kept back the violence and pain of his desire; the image of Rosalind tortured him with longing.

September came, and the time of his holiday, and one evening Mr. Godden asked him to go in and see him. He found him alone in his library.

"It's about your holiday," Mr. Godden said. "I think you'd better take a month this time."

"It's awfully good of you, sir."

"That's all right. I'm worried about you, Arnold. I can't bear to see you looking so horribly seedy. Are you sleeping badly?"

"Pretty badly."

A long pause.

And then (Arnold felt it coming), "Have you heard from Rosalind lately?"

"I haven't heard since she left."

"I thought perhaps you'd want to go over to Paris when you got your holiday."

(He didn't know, then.)

"I'm not going. It would be no use, sir."

"How do you know, if you haven't tried again? Unless you've written to her——"

"I haven't written and I haven't heard."

"We haven't either. It's queer." He looked at him keenly.

"Do you know anything about her?"

"No, sir."

He could see that Mr. Godden knew he lied.

"What do you *think*? Do you think she's with Schoonhoven?"

"How do you mean, *with* him?"

"I mean, living with him, supposing he's there."

"Why should she be?"

"Don't tell me anything you don't want to. I'd rather not know. And yet I'm not sure I oughtn't to tell her father."

"What can you tell him? You don't know anything. You don't even know that he's in Paris with her."

"I might tell him to go and find out."

"I wouldn't, sir."

"You wouldn't? You'd leave it alone, if you were me?"

"Yes. You'll do no good."

"But hang it all, Arnold, if she is with Schoonhoven?"

"If she is, you'll never get her away from him. There'll only be a most unholy row. And if she isn't—what fools you'll look."

"I suppose we must give her the benefit of the doubt."

"Give her the benefit of everything. After all, Schoonhoven's got to be in Paris if they're playing together."

Whatever happened he must keep Linda's secret. How could he give her up to them to be tracked and hunted down and made ashamed? And Linda's uncle hadn't shown any firm determination to get it out of him; it was clear that he shrank from the responsibility of interference. He might wonder whether Max Schoonhoven was Linda's lover, but if he was he would rather not know it.

They turned the subject and went back to Arnold's holidays. He was to go next week to Dartmoor for a month with Wilfrid. They sat on far into the night talking metaphysics as if Rosalind had never been.

His mother was sitting up for him when he came in.

"What did he want you for?" she said; "keeping you up till midnight when you ought to be in bed."

Arnold told her about his holiday.

"I'm glad you're going," she said, "it'll do you good. But surely it didn't take all that time to settle it?"

"Oh no, we talked about things."

"You're very mysterious." Suddenly her eyes pounced on him. "You haven't heard anything about that girl, Rosalind Verney?"

He steadied his voice to answer. "Not a word."

"You aren't worrying yourself about her, I hope?"

"What makes you think I'm worrying?"

"Your poor face, Arny dear. And you're as thin as thin. You're making me very unhappy."

"You needn't worry."

She looked at him humbly and shyly. "You don't want to tell me about it?" she said.

"There isn't anything to tell."

He was sitting on the sofa, leaning forward, his elbows propped on his knees, and his face hidden in his hands. She got up and came to him. She put her hand on his head and stroked his hair.

"Poor Army," she said.

He looked up at her, drew down her face to his and kissed it. She knew ; but not, thank God, about Max Schoonhoven.

After a time his fear of Winifred and Mary Unwin left him. He had turned from them because of Rosalind, and because of Rosalind he came to them again. He couldn't go on any longer without knowing what had happened to her, and he wanted the peace that Mary Unwin had given him.

Winifred could tell him nothing except that Rosalind and Max Schoonhoven had been playing together in Paris and that the colony of rich Americans had taken them up and they were giving lessons. This meant that Schoonhoven was at least helping Rosalind to keep him. Winifred thought that Mary Unwin might know more about them. He went to Mary Unwin. She was living in Rosalind's old rooms in Tavistock Square.

"She'll come here," Mary said, "when she comes back."

"You still believe in her coming back?"

"Yes. When it's all over and she's unhappy."

"Do you think she's happy now?"

"I'm afraid I do."

Arnold smiled. "We ought to be glad she's happy."

"We want her to be happier, to have something that will last. This can't last, and the sooner it ends the better."

"It doesn't look like ending."

"Not yet. Wait."

"What a brute I am to want her to be unhappy!"

"You don't. You want her to be safe. She isn't safe with Schoonhoven and she knows it. Has she written to you?"

"No."

"She's afraid to. Have you written to her?"

"No. Would you, if you were me?"

"Better not. She's more likely to think of you if you don't. And what could you say to each other? She'd only keep on telling you how divine Max is, and you couldn't write back and say what you think of him."

He went to Mary Unwin again and again. Sometimes they talked about Rosalind, sometimes they talked about metaphysics. Mary was interested, and he had lent her his Spinoza.

(He had a copy of his own now.) He told her how he had first begun to think, and how Wilfrid had laughed at him and Mr. Godden had called him a mystic, and how he had gone on from one system to another, looking for the truth, and how uncertain he was that he had found it, and how afraid of being cheated in the end.

"To be cheated about such a tremendous thing——"

"I know. But you won't be cheated. You call it looking for the truth, but really it's looking for God."

"It's not much good looking for him, when every time he hides just when you think you've got him."

"Are you sure you're trying the right way to get him?"

"I'm not sure of anything."

"I don't think there's any intellectual certainty."

"Spinoza——"

"The intellectual love of God? It isn't intellectual. He says it's intuition. Spinoza takes for granted that God's there, and that we are parts of God. And the rest follows. Why not make the great experiment?"

"What's that?"

"Some people call it prayer."

"I never pray. It's stupid to suppose you can make God do what he wasn't going to do. God's will is my fate. How can I change it?"

"You don't change it. God's will isn't something outside you. If you are in God and not anywhere else, and God is in you, his will is in you. You will and the thing happens because your will is God's will. Praying is willing; it begins and ends inside you. You *are* God when you pray."

"Then you're simply praying to yourself?"

"If you like. To your real self which is God. But it won't work unless you know that you're one with him."

"I do know in a sort of intellectual way. I mean I can assent to the statement. But that doesn't get you very far."

"No. It's more than that. It's a sense that comes to you."

"Does it come to *you*?"

"Sometimes."

"How does it come?" He was possessed with curiosity to know Mary's secret.

"There are lots of ways. With great happiness or great unhappiness, when it's something more than you can bear. Or with great danger. And always with great love. And with seeing some intensely beautiful thing. Those are the places

where reality breaks through. It's come sometimes when Linda's been playing. It's quite unmistakable and it's like nothing else on earth."

He didn't think it would ever come to him.

"But it will," said Mary Unwin. "If you want it enough."

And as he went away from her, he thought :

There's Mary who doesn't know any philosophy, and yet she knows everything that matters, and knows it with an absolute certainty. What wouldn't I give to be as sure as she is !

He would never be sure.

Three years passed. There were changes in Ilford. A church was built near the gravel-pit in the field at the end of the avenue. The land was left fallow and presently the builders came with their sheds and their planks ; they marked out the plots for the building. Next Arnold's trees, the three tall elms that he saw from his bedroom window, were cut down ; they lay stretched on the desolate flat, till they were carted away. Then the little white rough-cast and red-tiled villas went up one by one. There was a street of them at the end of the three years. The country was gone and its beauty ; nothing remained but the avenue of limes and Vinings lake with its willows, and the meadows sloping up to the old rose-pink Georgian house.

Change after change. Richard had gone into business for himself ; he was making a large income on the Stock Exchange, growing stout and drinking harder than ever, so that even his mother knew. But he was a wonderful business man. For the last seven years he had been joint trustee of his mother's capital with Mr. Fisher. And now Uncle William was dead and Richard was sole trustee. And miraculously Mrs. Waterlow's income began to increase, so that at the end of the three years it rose from two hundred and fifty that it had been to three hundred and fifty. And as Arnold and Richard each paid a hundred a year towards the housekeeping (Richard was so well off by this time that he could be fairly punctual with his share), Mrs. Waterlow began to save. And Richard invested her savings so wonderfully that they brought in a lot besides.

And Mrs. Waterlow began to talk of moving into a larger and better house, of leaving Ilford. Arnold could see that she wanted to get him away from Ilford, to get him away from the Goddens and from Rosalind Verney if she should ever come back. She thought that he would leave off caring for Rosalind if only he could be kept away from her long enough.

He had heard of Rosalind three times in those three years. Once in each year she and Max Schoonhoven had come to London to play there. He had seen their names and faces on the posters but he had not been to hear them ; he couldn't go through all that again. And Rosalind had not come out to Ilford. She had stayed in hotels with Schoonhoven, and neither Mary Unwin nor Winifred had seen her for more than a few minutes at a time. Each year she and Schoonhoven had been playing in the provinces, drawing larger and larger audiences. And Arnold had heard of their going to America. At first it had been Rosalind Verney, now it was Rosalind Verney and Max Schoonhoven. Rosalind had carried him on with her in her career ; he had owed everything to her in the beginning.

"He doesn't deny it," Winifred said. Only now, she thought, somebody else was backing him ; some rich American woman ; she had helped to arrange the American tour.

Then (it was in the spring of eighteen ninety-three), Arnold heard that they had come to London again, with the American woman, Molly Dexter. Rosalind and Schoonhoven were playing at a concert in Queen's Hall. Winifred brought him news of it. They had been really "tremendous" this time.

"You don't tell me how she is," he said.

"I don't know. She won't say. She doesn't look well and I don't think she's happy."

But there was no doubt about the "terrific success." They would be playing in Berlin and Prague and Vienna next, all over Europe. There would be no end to it. It would always be Rosalind Verney and Max Schoonhoven.

And then, suddenly, the end came.

Three days after the Queen's Hall concert Arnold had a telegram from Mary Unwin.

"Linda ill. Come and see her.—MARY."

He wired back, "Coming.—ARNOLD"; and he went out to Bloomsbury in the early evening when his office work was done.

He found Linda lying on the couch, propped up by cushions. She was thinner than she used to be ; her face was very white, and there were hollows in it under her cheek bones. Her eyes filled with tears when she saw him. She held out her hands to him.

"Arnold——"

He couldn't speak. He took the chair that Mary Unwin pushed forward beside the couch, and sat watching Linda's white

face and the tears gathering in her eyes and falling. He tried to say something about being sorry she was ill, but he couldn't follow it up. His throat closed on his voice and choked it.

"I'm not ill," she said.

He heard Mary get up quietly and leave the room.

"Did Mary say I was?"

"Yes."

"I suppose she wanted to prepare you for the shock. Of seeing me, I mean, looking like this."

"What is it, Linda?"

"You haven't heard then?"

"No. I haven't heard anything. Mary only told me you were ill."

"I wish I *was* ill. I wish I was dead."

"What's happened?"

"I should have thought you'd have guessed from my coming here. It's Max. He's left me. He's going to marry Molly Dexter."

"Yes. It's the sort of thing he would do."

"It isn't. He couldn't help it. He couldn't go on any longer as we were. It was all father's fault."

"Darling—how do you mean?"

"Well—he found out about Max and me. And he cut off my allowance. He thought that would stop it. But it didn't. We went on for a year, having the most awful time. Max had to teach, and he hates teaching."

"But—you were playing everywhere. Winifred said you'd had a terrific success."

"She always says that. It never was so terrific as she thinks. And there's ~~not~~ much left when you've paid your expenses. You ~~have~~ to give away tons of tickets. Really, it's been a ghastly struggle. Max couldn't stand the strain of it. You don't know what it was like."

"Why didn't you tell me? I couldn't do much, but I could have done something."

"I didn't want you to know. I didn't want you to worry. Max was all right till Molly Dexter came. She helped him."

"I see. He took *her* money."

"She's frightfully rich. What could he do? I hadn't any."

"No. I suppose he'd taken everything you'd got."

Linda didn't say he hadn't.

"You think he's awful," she said. "But you can't judge

Max like other people. He's no idea of money. He's like a child. He has to be taken care of. And Molly can take better care of him than I can."

She paused. Her wide, candid eyes looked straight at him, as if she defied him to judge Schoonhoven.

"He's not in love with her," she said. "He's in love with *me*. He always was in love with me. He'll be in love with me again."

"Then he isn't, *now*?"

"Oh yes he is. Only he's angry with me. He was furious because I told Molly he was my lover."

"Why did you?"

"Arnold, it was beastly of me. I thought it would keep her off him. But it didn't. You see, *she's* in love with him. She said if I loved him I'd give him up to her, that I'd no business to ruin his career."

"The brute! He wouldn't have had any career if it hadn't been for you."

"Yes. But I couldn't help him any more. And Molly could. She's been an angel. She knows he isn't in love with her. She's years older than he is and she isn't pretty. She knows the risk she's taking and she doesn't care. I'd kill myself if I thought he loved her. But he doesn't. He loves *me* and the poor thing knows it."

"He loves you but he loves the poor thing's money more."

"It's not her money. It's his career. That's what I've got to think of."

"Well, you mustn't think of dying. He's not worth dying for, Linda."

"He is, Arnold. If I could only have had him by dying afterwards it would have been worth it. The only thing is I don't know how I'm going to live without him."

"One does live, somehow."

"You mean, you've lived. Arnold, I should hate myself if I thought I'd made you feel like I'm feeling."

"Don't think about it, then."

"But did I? Did I hurt you as badly as all that?"

"You did."

"Does it hurt still?"

"Damnably."

"Then you do love me still?"

"You know I do."

"I was afraid you didn't. It would have served me right."

" You still want me to love you ? "

" Yes. Yes. Only it isn't fair; when it's not a bit of good."

" Is that why you sent for me? Did you want to know that? "

She shut her eyes. " I don't know. I just *wanted* you. Oh, I'm so tired ! "

" Poor darling, do you want me to go ? "

" No. Stay." She held out her hand, her poor hand. He took it and stooped over it and kissed it.

" I'm only tired because I can't sleep. Max won't let me. All the time it's as if he was there and not there. Oh Arnold, shall I never leave off thinking of him ? "

" Yes. It doesn't last for ever."

" That's what Mary says. But it'll last my time," said Linda.

It lasted, with short moments of forgetting, for a year.

" She'd be better," Mary said, " if she could play."

But for a year Linda's violin had lain in its case under the couch that was her bed. She hadn't looked at it once. As for playing, Linda said she would never play again. Never.

" I can't play with Max and I won't play without him."

Yet even Linda owned that Winifred was right about her performance at Queen's Hall. She had been, this time, a terrific success. Hitherto she had to find her own engagements and Schoonhoven's, now engagements pressed in on her, and Linda refused them all. She was furious when they talked about her success. " It was his success. I couldn't play fit to be heard before I played with Max. How can I play without him? "

" He's done for her," Winifred said. " As if her career didn't matter at least as much as his."

" I know—— "

" It's the worst thing that could have happened to her."

" It isn't sane, Winifred. She doesn't give herself a chance."

But Mary Unwin said, " Wait. She can't go on like this for ever. Some day she'll play again. Then you'll know she's got over it."

Arnold waited. In the last week of May the news came that Schoonhoven had married Molly Dexter in New York. Linda came to stay with the Goddens in July. And in one of her moments of forgetting he asked her again to marry him. It was

a hot, shining day, and they had gone over Wanstead Flats to the Roding and were sitting together on the river bank. Linda had taken off her shoes and stockings and had dipped her white feet in the river, and Arnold had dried them on his pocket-handkerchief and Linda had laughed, a sudden happy laugh. He felt that it was his moment.

"Linda," he said, "will you marry me *now*?"

And suddenly she was sad again. "No, Arnold, I can't. It's no *good*, darling."

"Why not if you love me? You said you did. You'd have married me long ago if Max hadn't been there. And he isn't there now."

"How can I, when I'm thinking about him all the time?"

"You can't go on thinking about him, darling."

"Yes, I can."

From her very obstinacy he judged that Linda was keeping it up with an effort, with a stubborn determination to go on thinking about Max, and that he had only got to wait till she had worn herself out.

And Mary Unwin said, "You must give her time, Arnold. You were much too soon. Wait till you hear her playing again."

The year went on. In the autumn and winter Linda came again and again to the Goldens; and still her violin lay in its coffin-case under Linda's bed. It looked as if Linda were never going to play again.

The spring of ninety-four passed. And one Sunday in May Arnold went to see Linda. Mary Unwin had asked him.

A bell at the house door rang into Linda's rooms. Mary came down to let him in. On the first landing she stopped him. "Listen," she said.

From the floor above, muffled by the shut door, there came the sound of a violin.

Mary opened the door softly. They listened on the threshold.

Linda stood in the middle of the room, half turned from the doorway, not knowing they were there. She was playing to herself, alone, in a sort of ecstasy; her body was thrown back slightly, like a dancer's, her head lifted back from her violin.

Vroomp-Vroomp, the sharp, sudden chords broke through the dance and rang out and vibrated, and the dance followed them faster and faster, crescendo, crescendo. Vroomp-Vroomp, and the notes ran like the hurrying feet of the dancers; Linda's body swayed; she was working the excitement up and up, from sharp crash to sharp crash of the chords; she played in

triumph and defiance, as if with every stroke of her bow she shook off the memory of Max Schoonhoven.

When it was ended she turned to Arnold. "So you're there, are you?"

And then, "That's Max's last thing. "Danse Nocturne." He sent it me. It's great, isn't it?"

It *was* great.

Mary looked at Arnold and her eyes said clearly, "She's got over it."

XXX

MARY had left them together and Rosalind was talking about Max Schoonhoven. She talked without grief and without passion, quietly, as if it had all happened years ago.

"You do realise how great he is when I play him," she said. "Molly can't play him. She can't take his music from me."

"Nobody can take it from you. You've got the best and finest of him, Linda."

"Yes. I've got his genius."

"And Molly's only got *him*," he said. "If you had to choose wouldn't you rather have his genius?"

"I don't know, Arnold"

"You're safe with it. It'll never hurt you, never do anything you can't bear to think of; it'll always be beautiful."

"You're not jealous of it?"

"No."

"Even if I love it?"

"Even if you love it."

"Well, you needn't be. I don't love it more ~~than~~ I love you."

"Do you love me more than you did last year?"

"Ever so much more."

"Enough to marry me?"

Her hand lay beside him on the couch. He covered it with his own and she let it stay.

"Yes. Enough. But I mustn't."

"Why 'mustn't' you?"

"Because it would be such an awful risk. I oughtn't to let you take it."

"I'll risk anything if you'll have me."

"Anything?"

"Anything."

She had turned her face straight to him. "Will you risk my going off with Max again if he comes back to me?"

"Yes. I'll chance it."

"You think it won't happen?"

"It can't happen all at once."

"No, but if ever—— You don't know, you don't know how perfectly awful I am, Arnold. I'll be all right if Max stays away, if I don't see him again. But if I did see him, if I heard him play, if he asked me to go away with him, I believe I'd go. I'd have to go. I can't promise not to. What's the good of a wife who can't promise to be faithful to you?"

And yet her hand still lay under his own.

"I'll risk it, Linda. I won't ask you to promise anything. It mayn't ever happen."

"It might. I don't want it to happen, but it might."

"You don't want it to happen?"

"No. I don't want Max to come back. I don't want to see him again. I want to be happy with you."

"You think you *will* be happy with me?"

"Yes. But it's wicked of me. I want you. I want to be with you, I want to go on loving you. And yet if Max came back I should want him, too."

He took her in his arms, and her hand slid over his heart, and her arms held him close as his own; she gave her face to his face, and her mouth to his mouth; her eyelids shut under his kisses.

"You don't want him *now*?"

"No. Not now."

"You're not thinking of him?"

"No. I won't think of him again. Till he comes, and I hope he never will."

"He won't come. It won't happen, Linda."

"Perhaps it won't."

She sighed and lay quiet in his arms.

His mother kept on crying

He had had to tell her. He had made up his mind to tell her at once and get it over. He could hardly expect her to be pleased to hear that he was engaged to Rosalind Verney, but he was not prepared for this extremity of lamentation.

To begin with, he had chosen his moment badly, coming on her in the half-hour that followed Richard's announcement of his intention to leave Ilford and live by himself. Richard was

so well off now that he could afford a house of his own, and he had taken one in Kensington. You would have thought that with an income like that, his first idea, since he wasn't thinking of getting married, would have been to make a home for his mother and sister ; but no, Richard had shown very clearly that he didn't want any of his family to share his Kensington house. And as if Richard's behaviour wasn't bad enough, here was Arnold saying he was going to marry that girl, Rosalind Verney.

"So," Mrs. Waterlow said bitterly, "I am to be left alone."

"Well, I can't ask you to live with Rosalind if you feel like that about her."

"Live with Rosalind ! I'd rather see you in your coffin than married to that girl."

"Yes, mother darling, you've told me that before." He was very gentle with her.

"Much you heed what I told you."

"Because it's such rot. You wouldn't really rather see me in my coffin. You don't even think you would."

Convicted of falsehood, she abandoned the idea of Arnold in his coffin, and took another line.

"Understand, Arnold, that if you do this, you're doing it against my will."

"I'm sorry, mother. But I'm afraid I'm doing it."

"You don't care how unhappy you make me ?"

"I do care. But *i'm* not making you unhappy. It's your own little obstinacy."

"Obstinacy, indeed ! And I suppose you're not obstinate ? Going your own way without giving one thought to other people."

"Of course I'm going my own way. Nobody marries to please other people. And I'm thinking of Linda."

"Well then, go your own way, and take the consequences."

He laughed. "I'm prepared to take them. You've no idea how funny you are, darling."

"Oh, laugh, laugh, laugh. As if it was a laughing matter ! Wait till you've been married three years. What sort of wife do you suppose she'll make you, a girl who does nothing but fiddle like a man ? She'll know no more about housekeeping than the cat. You'll be poisoned with bad cooking. You'll go in rags, for your clothes will never be mended. She'll not put in a stitch. And what will you do with your stomach permanently deranged ? If she has children, God help them !"

She was off in a flight, foreseeing the remotest consequences of Arnold's marriage.

"How will you like to be shut up in a little poky house with half a dozen screaming babies, and that fiddle going half the night? Is she going to give up her fiddling?"

"Certainly not."

"In public?"

"If she wants to. I'm not going to stop her career."

"A fine career. Going off with goodness knows who all over the country, the way she did with that man."

"That's enough, mother."

"It's no good my warning you. You'll only talk me down."

"But, mother dear, whoever I married, you'd hate her. You know you would. You'd hate Richard's wife if he'd got one. You'd hate her ten times more than mine."

"Richard would never marry a girl like that. If you think it's jealousy, you're mightily mistaken."

"What is it then?"

"It's because I love you, Arnold, and I want you to be happy."

"In your way. Not mine."

"In the best way," she said.

"Poor little mother. You'll see it's the best way when you know Rosalind."

"I see you'll do what you like," she said absurdly, "and I can't stop you."

"No. You can't stop me. Poor little thing."

He put his arm round her and kissed her. After all, in her own way she loved him, though not as he loved her.

But she was in no mood to be comforted. She told him sharply to "Go away," and presently he went.

It was the first decisive battle of his manhood. He had fought down her will with his will. He was delivered for ever from the power of his mother. He went free.

He couldn't believe that it was theirs, the little white Regency House in Downshire Hill, Hampstead. They had furnished it cheaply with fumed oak and blue art serge and casement cloth, and with Rosalind's things from Tavistock Square and the book-case and writing-table from Arnold's room.

In the first mad week of it he and Rosalind would go down into the basement after the servant had gone to bed and look at the rows of blue and white china on the white kitchen dresser, and the pots and pans, shining like silver in the scullery. Incredible that all these things belonged to them.

The house was absurdly small ; Rosalind's tea-table and couch and the long, sprawling piano filled up two sitting-rooms ; but when you opened the folding doors between them you had a space big enough for her music to overflow into. It pierced the doors and walls and ceilings ; it streamed out into the garden and the street.

In the warm summer that followed their honeymoon Arnold worked for hours in the back garden with Rosalind. He loved the garden because Rosalind loved it. He began to understand that passion for sowing and planting which had interfered so much with Mr. Godden's reading. Incredible that the garden was his own and Rosalind's.

He had passed suddenly to this richness and variety of possession from a state in which he owned nothing but his books, his clothes, his pens, his toothbrush and brush and comb. The very ink he wrote with was his mother's. The writing-table and bookcase had been hers. Incredible that they should be his now. Most of all incredible that Rosalind belonged to him ; to have done with her for so long and suddenly to have her, here in his house, to know that she was safe with him.

For he believed in Rosalind's safety. She could not have given herself to Schoonhoven more completely than she gave herself to him. And lest he should have a doubt, she told him again and again that she was happy.

" I knew I should be happy with you, and I am."

He remembered what she had said to him the first time he had asked her to marry him.

" And that ' something beyond happiness,' do you still want that now ? "

" No. There's nothing beyond this. Nothing. Nothing."

And his happiness, too, was perfect. He couldn't conceive any bliss beyond the bliss she gave him.

There were things in the dark of his mind, memories, imaginations, that would have destroyed his bliss if he had turned the light on to them. If he had looked—— But Arnold didn't look. At his worst an incorruptible decency had kept him from looking. The images of Rosalind and Max Schoonhoven came together in the dark of his mind, but in its light the image of Rosalind stood alone, innocent for ever ; so that he could think of her as though Schoonhoven had never been her lover.

And his mother was wrong about her. There was nothing Rosalind couldn't do in the house. She could darn his old socks and knit new ones, she could sew on his buttons ; she

could make her own clothes, she could make stews and puddings and cakes ; she could bake bread. She had been prepared to face poverty with him. After that last year in Paris she could have faced anything. But as it happened, there was no poverty to face. Rosalind's father, appeased by her separation from Schoonhoven, had restored her allowance, and he continued it after her marriage. And Rosalind was playing again that autumn in London and Liverpool and Manchester. Out of six performances she had made a hundred pounds. They knew now that there was nothing " tremendous " and " terrific " about her success, but it was sufficient and it was going to last. Next year her engagements multiplied. They considered themselves rich with five hundred and fifty a year.

" We're bloated, Linda ; we're bloated."

And they began to think of giving back the allowance. Then for a while Rosalind stopped playing.

The baby was born late in the autumn of eighteen ninety-five.

Arnold's mother came to see them then. Her resentment and jealousy were gone. She loved Rosalind because she had had the baby.

He lay in his cot, doubling up his legs and arms, smiling to himself, making nice noises. Rosalind and Arnold sat beside his cot, looking at him, wondering what he would do next. Incredible that they should have had him.

And now he had begun to look at them, he knew when they were there. He made louder and more decided noises. You could almost have believed they had a meaning. He laughed when you poked your fingers into his soft cheeks.

He was always laughing. He laughed when you looked at him and when you spoke to him ; and when your face popped out suddenly from behind the pocket-handkerchief his whole body writhed with laughter. He would lie on his back in his pram, all alone, and laugh to himself for his own amusement. He lay on the floor on his stomach and made swimming movements with his legs and arms. He chuckled as he swam.

And now he could drag himself along the floor ; he went faster and faster, chuckling.

And now he crawled. He was wonderful. When he heard Rosalind's violin he looked up and smiled in ecstasy.

He loved Arnold and Rosalind. He struggled and stretched out his arms to them and cried, and was appeased when they took him. They were never tired of holding him, of kissing his

soft, sweet-smelling skin. He was dark and white, he had big dark eyes and thick dark hair, dark duck's tails curling up in the nape of his neck with a heart-breaking absurdity. But it was when he could run about that they began to get what Arnold called the good of him. Crawling, he had been adorable; running about, he distracted, enthralled, enchanted them. Arnold thought of him in the office, he counted the hours till he could get back to him and see what he was doing. He loved Rosalind more because of him. He hadn't thought it possible that he could love her more.

Baby began to say things. It was an endless amusement trying to make out what he said.

"He is clever," said Rosalind.

Arnold's mother said he was the image of what Arnold had been at his age. "He only wants a little Thames tunnel along the top of his head."

They began to wonder what he was going to be.

"You can see he's thinking," Rosalind said.

"I'd give anything to know what he thinks about," said Arnold.

"He's going to be like you, Arnold."

"No, he isn't. He's going to be like *you*."

He was going to be a thinker. He was going to be a musician. He was going to be Something Wonderful.

"Won't it be jolly," she said, "seeing him growing up and being it?"

Baby's face took on a look of grave, meditative beauty.

"It means something," they said. They wondered what it meant.

He was beautiful and sad like the child Rosalind. He hardly ever laughed now.

"He is funny," said Rosalind.

"He's found out that life's a damned serious affair," said Arnold.

Baby's face grew sadder and sadder, more and more meditative. And in the spring of eighteen ninety-eight, when he was two years and five months old, he died of meningitis.

That was what his look had meant.

XXXI

RAIN rapped on the window-panes ; it streamed down, glistening, grey against the black houses, in the twilight of the hidden moon. The black road glistened with rain.

Rosalind turned from the window quietly and left the room.

Arnold went on trying to read : Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, but his mind wandered ; it kept on returning and returning to the dead child. He felt cold and sick with grief. He was glad of the sound of the rain that beat on his mind and stilled it.

It was three days after the funeral.

He wondered what Rosalind was doing. He wondered why she didn't come back. He went upstairs. The door of their bedroom stood open ; she was not there. The nursery door was shut ; he opened it, bracing himself for the pang ; he thought he would find her crouched, crying there in the dark. She wasn't in the nursery. Down in the hall he saw that her coat had gone from its peg. Once or twice before, since the baby died, she had slipped out at night, and he had followed and found her walking on the Heath and crying in the dark. He followed her now.

He went through the posts on to the East Heath ; the wide walk under the trees was deserted.

He found her on the path between the ponds, leaning against a rail and looking down into the black glistening water.

" Linda, is that you ? "

" Yes. You might leave me alone." He could feel her eyes turned on him, haggard and sullen with grief.

He put his hand on her shoulder. It was drenched with rain.

" Darling, you mustn't stay out in the rain. You're wet through. You'll catch cold."

" I don't care if I do. I don't care if I die. I wish I was dead."

He said nothing. He unfastened her fingers' tight clutch on the iron rail, he put his arm in hers and drew her gently away. She came without any resistance ; she was utterly weak and defenceless and without will.

She sat before the fire, stretching out her hands to the blaze, shivering with her sick grief. She talked and he had to listen ; talking tortured him but it seemed to comfort Rosalind. He let her talk.

" Arnold, I can't bear it. I keep on seeing him."

" So do I."

" If it had only happened once, but it keeps on happening all the time. I see it happening over and over again. And the way he looked at me—the little lamb ! "

" I know, darling, I know."

" If only we'd known—— "

So it went on. At night, when she lay awake beside him, he heard her crying for the baby. She gave herself up to her grief as she had given herself up to her passion ; she lived no other life.

Months passed. It was summer. Rosalind began to go about as if nothing had happened ; she read, sewed, played on her violin, worked with him in the garden. But she did everything by fits and starts, listlessly, without will. She went through her scales and exercises every day, with a sure, methodical perfection. She was appeased by the habitual, reiterated movements of her fingers. But the great, beautiful masterpieces got at her, shaking her heart and nerves ; sometimes she was afraid of them, and sometimes she rushed on them, wounding herself with their beauty ; and every now and then the image of the dead baby came before her and she would break off and cry again.

Once, in the late summer, when he came home from the office, he found her in the nursery. She had opened all the drawers and cupboards, and sat crouching on the floor, among the baby's toys. She had a pile of his little vests and petticoats in her lap ; she was turning them over and over and staring at them, at things that made his heart ache if he looked at them for an instant. She could turn them over, and sit and stare.

" Why do you do that ? " he said. " It's bad for you."

She shook her head, held out a tiny vest, stretched it, smoothed it and laid it folded on the pile. She looked up at him ; her face was set in a fixed, obstinate sadness, a sadness that tortured itself with memories.

"I was afraid of forgetting him."

"You won't forget him. But there's no good hurting yourself like this."

"When I'm hurt I remember."

He took the things from her and put them back into the drawer. He lifted her up and led her away ; she came quietly, without will. Downstairs she played to him, a sad, spiritless music.

He was glad to get away every morning into the office, to get away from Rosalind. He was glad of the monotonous, uninteresting work that drugged his grief. And every evening he hurried to get back to her. He always found her waiting for him, counting the minutes till he came.

"I can bear it better when you're there," she said. And then, suddenly, holding him fiercely, "If *you* died, I'd kill myself."

At the end of the summer Mary Unwin came to stay with them, and so long as she was with them they had peace.

Mary had gone and Rosalind fell back into state after state of hysteria and depression. She moved at the mercy of her emotions, without thought and without will. She would take out her violin and play on it for a few minutes and put it down without finishing what she had began. The scales and exercises still went on, but she couldn't keep her mind fixed on anything else for long together. She had not played in public since the baby died. And Rosalind not playing was only half alive.

And Mary Unwin said, as she had said before, "Wait. Give her time. She'll be all right when she plays again."

And in the autumn, while Arnold waited, the letter came from Max Schoonhoven, forwarded from Tavistock Place.

He would be in London, at the Langham Hotel, on the third of October. He was playing, on the tenth, in the Queen's Hall. After that he would be in Paris till the New Year. He hoped Rosalind would go and hear him. He would send her tickets. He wanted to see her. When could he see her ?

It was the thirtieth of September. He would be in London in three days.

She gave Arnold the letter to read.

"Well," he said, "you won't see him."

She was silent ; facing him at the other end of the table, she brooded sullenly. She seemed half-asleep.

"And you won't go and hear him."

She stirred ; she waked up. " Oh yes, I shall hear him. I shall have to."

" Much better not. Surely," he said, " you want to forget him ? "

" I can't forget him. I won't go and see him. But if he comes to see me—— "

" He doesn't know your address. You won't give it him." She was silent again.

There was nothing he could say to her. Everything he had said suggested that she wasn't safe, and he didn't want her to think she wasn't safe, he didn't want her to think he was afraid of Schoonhoven. The three years he had lived with her had made them safe. Their happiness made them safe and their unhappiness. They were so fastened together now that nothing could come between them. After all they had gone through together, after the child's life and death, how could she think of Schoonhoven ? As for going to hear him, perhaps she too wanted to show that she was not afraid.

The three days passed and the week before the tenth, and Max Schoonhoven had made no sign.

On the morning of the tenth the tickets came. Rosalind said, " It's Max's recital this evening. I want you to come with me."

" I'd rather not."

" I know you would. But you've got to come all the same."

" Why do you want me to ? "

" Because, if you're not there I shall have to see him afterwards, and if you are there, I can't."

" All right," he said, " I'll go."

They dined together at a restaurant and went on to the Queen's Hall. All through dinner Rosalind was restless and silent. Her eyes kept on watching him to see if he were looking at her, and turning away frightened, when they met his. As they sat, close together, in the concert hall, he could feel her body quivering. She was waiting half in fear, and half in a terrible excitement.

Max Schoonhoven came on to the platform. He bowed right and left with a jerk from his hips. He seated himself at the piano in majesty. She lifted her eyes slowly, unwillingly, and looked at him. Arnold could feel her body shrink into itself and stiffen. He could see Schoonhoven's eyes sweeping the rows of stalls until they found her. They met in a quick

look and parted. Schoonhoven smiled faintly. His hands came down on the piano.

He was changed. His bright colours had faded ; his slenderness was gone ; he looked coarser. A soft fold of fallow flesh wrapped his jaw and chin. Yet even in his decadence he was beautiful ; if anything, he was more noble, more majestic than he had been. But his simplicity had gone like his slenderness ; and his playing had changed. He wasn't playing any more as Rosalind played, and as he used to play, to himself, without knowing they were there. He knew. Oh, he knew ! He was playing to them. He was hardened, like a courtesan, by publicity, by the stare of hundreds and hundreds of eyes. It wasn't enough that they should listen to him, he kept that stare fixed on him ; with every phrase he made a distinct personal effect.

He had tricks and gestures, a way of making his whole body shake in the slow, noble passages, as if it were holding in the music and letting it out again under some solemn and tremendous constraint. He bowed his head above the keyboard till his hair fell over his eyes ; he tossed it, shaking back the dull golden mass. He did it again and again, on purpose ; he kept you watching for him to do it again. He lifted his hands high, exaggerating the consummate crash of their descent. In the passionate passages his mouth smiled, writhing in a voluptuous delight and torture.

And with all his gestures and his tricks he played divinely. He played Chopin and Schumann and Brahms, he played Beethoven, the "Sonata Appassionata," he played a Nocturne and a Sonata of his own. Each time, in the applause that followed, he looked at Rosalind as if he said, "Do you hear them ? It's come at last."

It was the beginning of the triumph that made Max Schoonhoven a European celebrity.

Arnold shut his eyes and listened. He couldn't bear to look at him.

It was all over. Rosalind's hand was on his arm ; she was telling him to get up and come away, quick. When the house door had closed on them she turned to him.

"I was good, wasn't I ? I didn't see him."

That night she clung to him as if she would never let him go.

The next evening when he came home he found the piano open and the top raised. Rosalind's music-stand was drawn out

beside it with the music on it. Rosalind lay on the couch exhausted. At first he didn't see what had happened.

"Winifred been here?" he asked.

"No. Max."

He turned away, hiding his anger.

"I'm sorry, Arnold," she said. "He came."

"If he comes when I'm here I'll tell him to go; and if he doesn't go, I'll chuck him out."

"He won't come when you're here. He's afraid of you. He wants me to play with him next year. He says nobody can play him like me."

"Do you want to play with him?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

She looked at him with her strange, unsoiled candour. "Because I played with him to-day."

She paused to let it sink into him. He didn't say anything and she went on, sure of herself and tranquil.

"You can't play with Max once without wanting to go on playing with him."

"You mustn't go on."

"I must. It's the only way I can get back my music. I thought I was done for till I played with him. It's like coming alive after being dead."

"You ought to keep clear of him, Linda."

"I can't keep clear of him. I didn't want him to come. But he *has* come. It's been taken out of my hands."

"It's in your hands whether you go on seeing him or not. And I'd rather you didn't. He isn't good for you."

"He *is* good for me. I wasn't properly alive. He's made me alive again, I tell you. I shall have to go on seeing him because I'm playing with him in January."

"I'd rather you didn't do that," he said again, quietly.

"I've got to. It was all settled the other night at the Queen's Hall."

"Look here, Linda, let's get it straight. Do you still care for him?"

"I don't care for him as I care for you."

"If you cared for me you'd give him up."

"I have given him up. But I can't give up playing with him. There's no harm in that."

"No, but you know what he is, Linda."

"He's different now. He's quite nice and gentle. I believe he's sorry. *I'm* different. Won't you trust me?"

"I must."

"If I cared for him I'd tell you. I've always told you the truth."

Yes. She had always told him the truth. It was no good going on together if he didn't trust her. But there was Schoonhoven——

"I don't trust *him*," he said.

"You may. It's all over. He doesn't care for me. He only cares about my music. If Max saves my music, he'll save *me*. I wanted saving. You know what it's been like this last year. If I could have played I'd have been better. You *do* want me to be well again like I used to be?"

"I wish you could have got well some other way."

You needn't worry. Max hasn't anything to do with it. It's his genius."

"I don't trust his genius."

"Well, he's going to-morrow. He won't be back for three months."

She began to work hard again at her music, preparing for next year's recitals. They were fixed for the twenty-third and the thirtieth of January, eighteen ninety-nine.

The three months passed. The twenty-third came, and the thirtieth. The Schoonhovens had come back on New Year's Day. They had taken a house in St. John's Wood with a studio in the garden. Every day, for the three weeks before the recital, Rosalind went to Schoonhoven's studio to practise. "It was all right," she said; "for Mollie would be there. If Molly didn't mind, Arnold needn't."

And on the evening of the twenty-third Arnold took her to the concert hall and called for her and brought her back. On the second evening he forced himself to stay and hear her playing with Schoonhoven. If she must do it, it was better for her that he should be there, and should be seen to be there, as if nothing had happened.

But he would never be able to hear them without pain. He had to own that Rosalind playing with Schoonhoven was more wonderful, more "tremendous," than Rosalind playing without him. He couldn't believe that this splendid, triumphant creature was the sick, beaten Rosalind who used to lie awake beside him crying for her baby.

She crouched on the floor at his feet, with her arms stretched out over his knees and her body bent and surrendered, her head resting on her arms. She clung to his knees, defenceless, trusting to him not to shake her off.

Two months had passed since the recital of the thirtieth.

"I told you," she said. "I told you not to marry me. I told you it would happen."

"You told me it was all over."

"So it was when I thought he didn't care for me. But he does care. He never left off caring."

"You said *you* didn't."

"I didn't know. I didn't know what it would be like. It all came back when I was playing with him. And now I'm frightened. . . . If he wants me to go to him, Arnold, I shall go. I told you I would."

"You can't, Linda."

"You know I can. I've done it before."

"That was different. It didn't matter so much then. He wasn't married. You weren't hurting anybody but yourself and me. Think of his wife if you won't think of me. Think of the awful pain you'll give her."

"Think of the awful pain she gave me. He belonged to me and she took him from me. How much did she think of me?"

"You don't mean that. You're not vindictive; you're not cruel. You don't want to hurt her."

"No. I don't *want* to. But I shall have to, all the same. If I can hurt *you*——"

"You'll hurt yourself most, my dear child. You know how miserable you were before."

"I wasn't. I was absolutely happy till Mollie came and spoiled it."

"You think you can be happy when she isn't?"

"She won't be unhappier than she is now. She oughtn't to have married Max and she knows it. You oughtn't to have married me and you know it. You did it with your eyes open, both of you."

"You *are* cruel, Linda."

"If I am I can't help it. I'm not cruel to Max. Can't you see that it's cruel of *you* to want to keep me from him?"

"No. I know what he is."

He could see that nothing he could say would move her. Her passion was deaf to everything but itself, blind and deaf. There were, as she had said, two Rosalinds, and the good Rosalind

who loved him was helpless, without any will ; the other was fierce and powerful and would have her way. She would leave him and go to Schoonhoven. This appalling thing would happen and he couldn't stop it. He couldn't lock Rosalind up in her room ; if she left him, he couldn't drag her back by a cart-ropes ; he couldn't have Schoonhoven arrested ; if he horse-whipped him till he yelled, he would only get a temporary satisfaction out of that. There was no way in which he could force Rosalind to live with him against her will. And he knew that if he could he wouldn't. Nothing was left for him but to stand back and not behave repulsively.

She had raised her head and was looking at him.

"Arnold—if I did leave you, what would you do ? "

"Do ? Good God, what *could* I do ? "

"Shall you divorce me ? "

"Do you want me to ? "

"No. I'd hate it. And it wouldn't be any good. Mollie won't divorce Max."

"How do you know ? "

"She told him. They've had it all out together. She'll never give him up, whatever he does. She won't mind so much if he goes on living with her, and he won't leave her."

"He won't leave her so long as he gets her money. But supposing she doesn't let him have any, do you imagine he'll stick to *you* ? "

"Mollie wouldn't do that. She'll never do anything mean about money. And she wants to keep him. Besides, he'll make lots now, himself ; so shall I."

"You understand him, yet you talk about going to him."

"I don't know that I'm going to him. It hasn't happened yet. I'm only telling you in case it happens."

"It won't happen if you pull yourself together and stop it. Aren't you even going to try ? "

"I *am* trying. I haven't seen Max for three weeks."

"Don't see him again, then, ever. Come away with me somewhere where he isn't. He'll be gone in another month. I'll get leave and take you to Italy and the South of France, and we'll stay out there till he's left England. You'll come, won't you ? "

"I'll do anything you like, Arnold. But you'll see it won't be a bit of good."

He took her away. He took her to the South of France and

Italy. She was docile and listless. She let herself be taken from Avignon to Cannes, from Cannes to Alassio, from Alassio to Rome, and from Rome to Florence. And for all the good it did they might as well have stopped at home. At night she lay awake beside him, crying for Max as she had cried for her baby. And at last, when they were sitting out on a hillside at Fiesole, looking down over Florence that lay gold-white and rose-red in the sunlight behind the tall black cypresses, she turned to him suddenly.

"Darling—why do you bring me to these heavenly places? They only make me worse. Take me home."

He took her home.

A week passed. Rosalind seemed to have settled down. The Schoonhovens were in Paris, and Rosalind had not spoken of Max since they left Florence; but at night he still heard her muffled whimpering.

One evening, when he had come home later than usual from the office, he found the house empty. The servant was out, and Rosalind was not there.

He went into the garden and up and down the house, looking into all the rooms. A letter lay on the table in his dressing-room with his name, "Arnold," on it in Rosalind's black handwriting. His hands shook as he tore it open, and for an instant his heart stood still. He read:

"DARLING ARNOLD,

"I did try. But it was no earthly good. Max sent for me and I've gone to him. I told you I'd go. I've never lied to you, not even when I said I loved you. I do love you. The best and nicest part of me loves you and always will; but it isn't the whole of me and all the rest of me loves Max. Don't think it doesn't hurt me to hurt you. I hate myself. I hate the awful part of me that loves Max and hurts you. I think if Baby hadn't died, perhaps it wouldn't have happened; I couldn't have left him, he was so little and helpless. And you aren't helpless, and I can't take care of you. And when he died I was so weak I hadn't any will left to fight Max. But I tried. Before we went away and afterwards.

"I chose the day when Maud was out because I knew you couldn't stand her looking at you after you got this. But I've left everything ready for you and your dinner's keeping hot for you in the oven.

" When I think that perhaps you won't be able to eat it—oh, my darling, how I hate myself and how I love your goodness ! Forgive me. Write and tell me you've forgiven me. And don't think about me more than you can help.

" Always your loving (because I *do* love you)

" LINDA."

He *wasn't* able to eat his dinner. His head burned and ached ; he shivered with cold and a creeping, wrenching sickness. He spent the evening trying to write to Rosalind, using up sheet after sheet of paper and burning them. In the end he wrote :

" DEAREST LINDA,

" Yes, I forgive you. At least you were honest and straightforward about it. I suppose whatever you did, I should forgive you. I still believe that you're hurting yourself as much as you hurt me. If you'll give up Schoonhoven now and come to me, I'll take you back. If he ever leaves you I'll take you back, and we'll begin again as if nothing had happened. After all, we didn't make such an awful mess of our life together. I shall always want you. Don't forget that. When it's all over you've only got to come.

" I won't divorce you, as you said you'd hate that.

" It may have been my fault, perhaps I oughtn't to have made you marry me. But I chose to take the risk and I'd take it again.

" Always your loving

" ARNOLD."

And Rosalind wrote again and thanked him for his letter, and said what he wanted was impossible. She could never come back.

XXXII

HE hated the house because it reminded him of Rosalind. In every room her image waited for him. He saw her sitting in her place by the chimney-piece, dressed in the blue frock she used to wear ; he saw her in her white nightgown standing by the dressing-table, combing out her long brown hair ; he could smell its poignant scent, he felt its cool sleekness as his hand slid over the shining mass. Her body lay beside him in the bed, it clung to him and wouldn't let him go. Her eyes looked at him out of the darkness, her mouth pressed on his mouth, he held her in a fearful, penetrating embrace.

Outside in the garden she waited for him ; he saw her stooping over the borders ; there, on the sunny side, was the clump of pansies she had planted the day before she went away. He closed the doors between the two sitting-rooms, to shut out the sight of her music-stand and piano. He had a bed made up in his dressing-room, to get away from her. But it was no use. Stay where he would, he was back in the places where she used to be ; her image came to him through closed doors.

This haunting had been bad enough when she was away with Schoonhoven five years ago ; but now it was intolerable. By living with her for three years her image had acquired a harder impact and solidity. It had learned a thousand ways of torturing him. And it had lost its innocence. He saw Rosalind and Schoonhoven in each other's arms ; he could no longer turn his mind from them ; they spared him no gesture. It was as if he had parted with his own ultimate decency.

The odd thing was that he felt none of the physical humiliation usual in his case. Through it all, there was something in him that endured, untouched by Rosalind's unfaithfulness, that stood apart and alone, beyond and above this misery. It was proud and undefeated ; it would go on.

Yet, asleep, he dreamed of Rosalind. He was back at Ilford.

He sat on the garden wall under the lime-tree, his sleep was drenched in the honey-sweet smell of the lime-flowers ; she stood by the wall, looking up at him ; she drifted down the avenue into the fields and was gone. He went through the fields, looking for her ; he knew that she waited for him by the stile. But when he came to the stile she was not there. A snake lay along the grey bar of the stile ; it pushed out its head at him and bit his hand. He passed into his mother's house by the kitchen stairs and went up and up to the top storey. In the old nursery he found Rosalind. She was sitting on the ottoman with her feet among his tin soldiers, trampling them, and when he put his arm round her she turned to him with an abominable look that woke him. In his dreams she was Eva Baxter and Vera Lister. Once she was Winifred ; and once she lay naked, curled up in the cat's cupboard, nursing a dead baby.

He had gone to see Mary Unwin.

After a little while they began to talk about Rosalind and Schoonhoven.

" Why doesn't his wife divorce him ? " he said.

" Because she wants to go on being his wife. He's a celebrity and she's banking on his future. She thinks he'll be the first pianist in Europe some day ; and she's not going to part with all that if she can help it."

" I see. It sounds pretty beastly."

" But she's in love with him. And I daresay she knows Max. She knows she can hold him by his freedom and his comfort. She knows she's stronger than Linda because she's got the money. He'll never leave her altogether so long as she keeps up his allowance."

" But she must know, if she cut him off, he'd leave Linda."

" She doesn't know it for certain. She's afraid he'll hate her if she comes between them. Besides, Mollie's magnanimous. That's how I see her. After all, she's got him there, in the rich, comfortable house. He won't leave *that* for Linda."

" And Linda ? "

" Linda lives in a flat by herself and gets as much as he'll give her. I daresay he goes home and tells Mollie he loves *her* best. What I'm sure of is that Linda still loves you. All her goodness and her sweetness loves you. Max is simply an illness that she gets. She can't help it."

" She knows what he is, and it makes no difference."

" My dear, you know what *she* is, and it makes no difference."

"Oh, *she*—— He isn't fit to touch her."

"No? There's his genius."

"If he didn't make it an excuse for his beastliness——"

"It's his genius, not his beastliness, that she sees."

"I suppose it is."

"Remember, it's through their playing they've got that tremendous hold on each other. It's more music than anything else with them. They play better with each other than without. They're dependent on each other for their perfection."

Perfection—that was what she had always wanted. And if she could get it in no other way?

"And you can imagine how playing together would work them up."

"I can. I've seen them. I suppose that was what she meant by something more than happiness. Perfection. And if she could only get it through him——"

"Yes. If you want to make excuses for her."

"She said it wouldn't have happened if her baby hadn't died."

"That's possible. She was beaten then and her will went. She had no moral strength left, poor darling."

"Poor little Linda!"

"Yes. Poor little Linda. That's all you can say."

And that was how he thought of her, with an infinite pity and forgiveness, as of a helpless creature driven by a fate too strong for it. Not quite responsible. Poor little Linda!

And every time that he had been with Mary, in communion with a mind that purified everything by its own purity, he came away believing in Linda's essential innocence. Deep down, in her heart and soul, in her innermost, secret self, Linda was innocent.

When he could bear it no longer, he let the Hampstead house furnished and went back to live with his mother. Joy separated them, and grief, his or hers, brought them together. His mother couldn't understand his marrying Rosalind and being happy with her; but she could understand his unhappiness when Rosalind had left him. And in the presence of unhappiness she could be wise; she never said a word that would have hurt him; no reproach, no blame of Rosalind; she knew where his wound was and never touched it. You could see that she thought of his life with Rosalind as a trivial interruption to his long life with her.

"I'm glad you've come back," she said, as if he had been away on a visit. "You don't know how I've missed you."

Her grey hair was piteous to him and pleaded for his love. He loved her now more than he had ever loved her. She was always ready for him when he came home; she would come to him and put her hands on his shoulders and lift up her small, wrinkled face to his, and he would take hold of her hands and draw her to him, close, and kiss her, and she would be glad of his kisses as if they had been Richard's. He could see she was trying to make up to him for what Rosalind had done.

Once she said, "Arnold, I believe you really care for me."

"Didn't you know that?"

"Well, I wasn't sure. You did when you were a little thing."

He remembered. He remembered how he used to run after her and cry for her; he remembered his long agonies of jealousy. When he was a little thing she had not cared for him as she cared for Richard, except when his father thrashed him. Now, when Rosalind had left him, she cared again. You had to suffer abominably to make her care.

XXXIII

It was April, nineteen hundred, a year from the day when Rosalind had left him. Arnold was thirty-seven.

He was thinking that he would have to see Richard about his mother's dividends, due in the March quarter, which had not yet been paid. Richard wasn't always punctual in sending them, but he had never been as late as this. At that moment Richard's telegram came.

"Can you dine with me to-night? Urgent.—RICHARD."

It had been sent from Kensington. Arnold was faintly surprised at Richard's absence from his office.

He went out to Richard's house. It was a frightful red brick thing, decorated with stripes of violent crimson paint and white stucco. He dined with Richard in a crimson dining-room and sat with him afterwards in the place that Richard called his study, furnished like a luxurious office: roll-top desk, swivel chair, Turkey carpet.

While they dined Richard made heavy attempts to be genial, drinking a great deal of Burgundy, followed by whisky and soda.

In the study, over coffee and liqueur brandy, there was a silence which Richard broke suddenly.

"Do you hear from that wife of yours at all?"

"No," said Arnold in a tone which implied that it was no business of Richard's whether he heard from her or not.

"Rum way she bolted with that long-haired josser. Can't think why you didn't divorce her. . . . All right, old chap, I won't talk about her if it makes you sick."

He stretched himself and lay back for a moment in bodily comfort, but the shifting of his eyes betrayed his inward uneasiness. You could see he had been trying to establish a position of superiority by reminding his brother that he'd made

a mess of his marriage. He, Richard, had not committed such an imprudence. He undid three buttons of his waistcoat ; the corners flew apart over his released, expanding stomach.

" I don't suppose," Arnold said, " that was what you wanted to see me about."

" No. No, it wasn't."

Richard pulled himself forward and became absorbed in searching all his pockets for his cigarette-lighter, which he finally found on the chimney-piece. He rose to reach it.

" Is it anything about those dividends ? "

" Er—partly."

Richard's eyes were at their old trick of escaping, of looking for a hiding-place.

" What's up ? " said Arnold. " You haven't been making away with the mater's capital, have you ? "

He thought that Richard would grin at the humour of this extravagant suggestion.

But Richard turned away. He went to the window, drew the curtains back and stood there, staring out into the blackness of the night.

Presently he turned again and faced his brother. His eyes were sullen.

" That's precisely what I have done," he said. " That's to say, it's gone."

" Gone ? Good God ! Where ? What have you done with it ? "

Richard now seated himself, and Arnold understood that he was no longer evading question ; he had given himself up.

" Well," said his brother, " that's a long story."

" Let's have it, all the same."

" The fact is," said Richard, " I've done a lot with it. And if I hadn't had the rottenest luck—— "

" Been speculating ? "

" Well, yes. I did it for the best. I thought, if I could double her little pile—— And the first investments paid splendidly. As you know, her income's been very much larger than it was, the last few years."

" I see. That was speculation."

" That was speculation. Discreet, legitimate speculation. Then last year I thought I'd go one better. I thought I could double her dividends and sell out while the shares were rising and increase the capital. Then the damned things dropped. Then they stopped paying."

"Well, what are you going to do about it?"

"Do? I can't do anything. I've dropped every blessed cent I'd got. I'm bankrupt myself."

He looked up, half furtive, half defiant, as if the fact of his bankruptcy cleared him of all blame.

"Oh yes, I know everything you've got to say," he said.

"I haven't got anything to say. Except I'm sorry."

"God knows I'd pay it back if I could. But I can't. That's to say I've got a hundred pounds left, about enough to take me to Australia. I suppose you can make me hand that over, but if you do I can't go to Australia; and I've got to go."

"How do you mean, got to?"

As he looked at his brother's shaking flesh and shifting eyes Arnold had the horrible suspicion that Richard had done more than speculate with trust money.

"I mean," said Richard, "it'll be a jolly sight better for the mater and all of you if I clear out before the wind's up."

"Hadn't you better tell me exactly what you've done?"

"No good, my dear boy. It hasn't been my fault. I was let in by that damned Jessop. Wish I'd never touched his stinking shares."

"Still," said Arnold, "I suppose you want me to tidy up the mess."

"Well, I'm afraid, it'll be up to you to look after the mater."

"You needn't worry about that. She'll be all right. I shan't tell her about this infernal business. It'll kill her if she knows it."

"I suppose," said Richard thoughtfully, "it would about do for her."

"She wouldn't mind so much if it had been me. But it's *you*. That's what'll break her, if she knows."

"I know. God bless her! But how are you going to keep it from her?"

"I think I can manage. She doesn't know anything about business, and as long as her dividends come in regularly she won't ask about the capital."

"But damn it all, Arnold, they won't come in."

"They will come in if I pay them."

"But how the dickens are you going to do it out of your screw?"

"Godden'll raise it if I ask him. I've saved a hundred and

fifty, so that she'll get her three hundred and fifty the first year, and two hundred after that."

"How'll you account for the difference?"

"She'll think I've been making bad investments. That won't hurt her. She'd rather think I was a fool than that you——"

"That I was a villain? You're pretty decent, I must say, Arnold. Pity we couldn't always hit it off together. My fault, I suppose."

"Oh, I don't know."

"I say, I'm damned sorry to have let you in for this."

"Of course you're sorry. I know all about that."

"If that swine Jessop hadn't let *me* in——"

"Look here, you're going to Australia. That's pretty risky, isn't it? What are you going to do when you get there?"

"I shall be all right. Charlie St. John—you remember Charlie?—he's out in Melbourne. He's got a job for me in his office."

"How did he manage that in the time?"

"The time? Oh, I wrote to him and he cabled back."

Then weeks ago Richard had seen it coming; he had secured his retreat beforehand. No matter who was ruined, Richard had contrived to be safe.

"I'm very glad to hear it."

"The mater'll think that's what I'm going for."

"Yes."

There was a long silence. Arnold broke it.

"I say, if I'm to clean up after you, I'd better have a list of those investments."

"You can't do anything with 'em. They're goners, every one. But you can have the list."

He rose and opened the roll-top desk, and after fumbling a little time, produced a bundle of papers.

"There you are. Better take them home with you."

Arnold took them home.

He found a full list in Richard's clear commercial handwriting, with a statement of the capital involved in each investment, the amount of the dividends and the dates of their payment. Prospectuses were attached. He made out that the bulk of Richard's and his mother's money had been sunk in the Cræsus Mining Syndicate, the Jobson's Reef Company, the Bronzite Company, and the Britannia United Insurance Society

(Telegraphic address, "Security," London); he smiled as the preposterous titles came up in their thick black type on the white paper: things that cried their rottenness to heaven; no human being with an embryonic brain would have risked a shilling in them. It was unbelievable that Richard, the wonderful business man, should have been so taken in.

He thought: He must have been drunk. Nothing else could account for the folly of it. It must have been well known that he drank. All the company promoters in the kingdom with rotten shares to sell would come to Richard Waterlow, certain of their prey.

And that was not all. He had gathered from Richard's incomplete confessions that he had been mixed up with some shady person called Jessop, and that he had not only bought rotten shares but that he had been selling them. No doubt Richard, in his drunken dream, believed that they were sound. Arnold wondered what Richard and Jessop had been up to, and how many innocent people they had let in. He was acutely sorry for Richard, beaten and dishonoured, quivering with funk, hiding in his Kensington house and running away to Australia to save himself. He had said good-bye to Richard last night. Perhaps he would never see him again. To-morrow morning Richard would go and say good-bye to their mother, and by the evening he would be gone.

Mixed with his pity for Richard was a certain anxiety on his own account. He saw himself handicapped for the rest of his life, struggling to pay back what Richard had made away with. He couldn't do it on his salary, he would have to get something to do in the evenings. But what could he do? Accountant's work? The idea was appalling. Coaching in the subjects that he knew? He would never get pupils. Suddenly it occurred to him that he could do reviewing. When he read an important book he always wrote an elaborate analysis of it, with critical notes. He had tried his hand at articles, but he had done nothing with them. It might be possible to get reviewing. Wilfrid Godden knew several editors. He would speak to Wilfrid about it to-morrow. He would speak to Mr. Godden.

He showed him the list and the prospectuses. Mr. Godden shook his head over the Cræsus Mining Syndicate, the Jobson's Reef Company, the Bronzite Company and the Britannia United Insurance Society.

"You're right, Arnold, he must have been very drunk."

"Poor devil!"

" I've no sympathy with him."

" I have. I'm awfully sorry. Just think how sick he must be feeling."

" I don't suppose he takes it half as hard as you do. Anyhow, he's looked out for himself and shoved the whole burden on to you. How on earth are you going to provide for your poor mother ? "

Arnold told him how.

" You'll never do it," Mr. Godden said. " I can't raise your salary to more than three hundred so long as you're only a cashier. I may as well tell you that I mean to make you manager some day if Simpson leaves. That'll be five hundred a year for you. But he isn't leaving yet. . . . I might lend you a hundred or so, but that won't carry you very far."

" It's awfully good of you, but I'd rather try and get on without borrowing."

He didn't know any more than Mr. Godden how he was going to do it. The worst of it was that he had to make Rosalind a small allowance, as her father had cut her off again. The Hampstead house, let furnished, only brought in thirty pounds over and above its rent. If he gave Rosalind seventy-five pounds a year, kept thirty for himself, paid fifty for his board and lodging at home, besides the two hundred for his mother's income, even with a salary of three hundred a year he would be twenty-five pounds short.

" I must get some more work," he said. " Do you think I could get any reviewing ? I know I could do it all right."

" Of course you can do it."

" Do you think "—he got very red, he hesitated ; he hated begging, even for work, he hated trying to get things for himself — " any of those chaps Wilfrid knows would give me some ? "

" You'd better ask him."

" Would he mind asking them ? It's frightful cheek, I know."

" Wilfrid's got cheek enough for anything."

" If I could only make twenty-five pounds a year ! "

" When you've made it you won't have a shilling for yourself beyond your bare living, not enough for your clothes. You must have them."

" Well, I shan't be worse off than I was when I earned thirty shillings a week at Soper and Horne's."

" My dear boy, you'd much better borrow from me. You can pay me interest."

But Arnold wouldn't borrow. He said he'd rather wait and see what he could do first. He knew what it meant. It meant returning to the old life of self-denial, the sixpenny lunch, the shabby suits, the longing for amusements he couldn't pay for and for books he couldn't buy. It meant lying to his mother to account for the apparent shrinkage of his own income; she must be made to think that his expenses were greater than they were. And with it all there was a new sensation that his reckless youth had never known: anxiety, fear of illness, of accident, of the unforeseen calamity he couldn't meet.

He mustn't think about those things. He must go on as if no calamity could happen. There was something in him, untouched alike by Rosalind's unfaithfulness, by the disaster Richard had brought on them, and by his own struggle, something unbeaten and defiant, younger than his thirty-seven years, that went on in spite of everything.

Wilfrid spoke to his friend, the editor of the *Metropolitan Review*, with the result that Arnold had work given to him on that flourishing weekly.

He soon found that he could make eighty pounds a year by reviewing and that he could pay for his clothes out of two articles accepted by the *New Monthly* (to his intense surprise). At the beginning of his second year Rosalind returned the cheque he had sent her, saying that she was making more than she wanted, more than she ever dreamed she could have made, and she couldn't think of taking any more of his poor dear money. She wouldn't have taken it before if she'd known how hard up he was, poor darling. But she didn't know. Winifred had only just told her. She and Max had been playing all over Europe. She gave him the places—Paris, Berlin, Leipzig, Munich, Vienna, Prague, Warsaw, Brussels, Stockholm and Copenhagen. What did he think of that? It would give him some idea how she was getting on. Rosalind's seventy-five pounds, added to the two hundred, with twenty-five from his earnings on the *Metropolitan*, made up his mother's income to three hundred, so that when his savings were exhausted he had only to account for a reduction of fifty pounds in her imaginary dividends.

His mother resigned herself to the loss without great bitterness, merely nodding her chin as much as to say it was what she expected from Arnold, and remarking that it wouldn't have happened if Richard had been looking after her affairs, and that Arnold would never be such a good business man as Richard.

Luckily her horror of business and her trust in any masculine judgment, even Arnold's, were so great that she never dreamed of asking him for a clear account. To Mrs. Waterlow investments were disagreeably mysterious things, and she felt that if you explained them to her all night she would never understand them.

So that the incident was closed when she had said that she hoped her income was safe and that she wouldn't lose any more of it ; that fifty pounds was a serious reduction in a small income, yet it might have been worse ; Arnold might have lost the whole of it ; and that, though it was a pity that Richard couldn't go on being her trustee, yet she was sure that poor Arnold had done his best. You couldn't expect that he would do as well as Richard.

And as the lease of the Ilford house was up in September, she consented to go and live in Arnold's Hampstead house, with Catherine for their one servant, and Martha, now old and infirm, to be taken care of.

There was one good thing about it, she said. At last she had got away from those Goddens.

But the separation was not so complete as she could have wished. Mr. Godden's lease was ended, too, and he had removed to Highgate. It was only half an hour's walk across the fields from the Waterlow's house to the Goddens' house on West Hill.

That autumn Rosalind was back in London ; she had taken a studio at Kensington in Edwardes' Square, and Arnold sent her the things she wanted from the Hampstead house which lost all likeness to the place that had known Rosalind as the Ilford house emptied itself into it. His mother gave sharp cries of distress when she saw her furniture being squeezed into the poky rooms. The big wardrobes and the dining-room side-board and sofa refused to be fitted in anyhow and had to be sold ; the rest was huddled together in confusion, sharp-cornered cabinets threatening the delicate white and green and gold what-nots, the open-work pattern of the Indian sofa hidden by intervening chairs. Only the mother-o'-pearl bird of paradise maintained its central position, as before, roosting in its mother-o'-pearl tree.

And Mrs. Waterlow lamented. " It'll never look the same again," she said. " I might as well not have any Indian furniture. I never thought that I should have to live in a place like this."

"I'm sorry, mother," said Arnold.

It was awful that she should think it was he who had brought her to it. But that was better than her knowing it was Richard.

XXXIV

THEY had been at Hampstead about eight months when Arnold heard again from Rosalind.

“ The Studio,
“ Edwardes’ Square.

“ MY DEAR ARNOLD,

“ I wonder if you would do a kind thing ? Would you go and see a little friend of mine, Effie Warren, who has come to live somewhere near you ? She’s all alone and miserably poor and doesn’t know a soul in Hampstead. She looks absurdly young, but you mustn’t be frightened ; she’s twenty-seven and frightfully intelligent, so I don’t think she’ll bore you, and it would cheer her up like anything to have somebody to talk to now and then. Mary Unwin knows her. She lives on about tuppence a year in one of those little white cottages in the Grove.

“ You needn’t be afraid of seeing me there, because we’re going to America next month and I shan’t have time to get over. Besides, I funk Hampstead.

“ Always your very affectionate

“ LINDA.

“ P.S.—I’m so sure you’ll go that I’ve told Effie you’re coming. She’ll be looking forward to you.”

Rosalind knew how to make him go. She had appealed to his pity, she had provided for all his objections and reassured his fear. Effie Warren was poor and alone and didn’t know anybody in Hampstead, she wouldn’t bore him and she wouldn’t let him in for seeing Rosalind. He would have refused to go near Effie Warren if she had been well-off and surrounded with people, or if she had been younger ; he knew any number of young girls, friends of Rosalind’s, of the Drapers at Ilford, of the Goddens, of the Manistys at Vinings, and none of them

interested him ; but he couldn't resist his idea of a pathetic Effie Warren, who would be waiting for him to come and see her.

So one Saturday afternoon he went. There were five little whitewashed cottages in a row behind strips of garden shut in by a green paling. He didn't know which was Effie Warren's cottage, but he thought it would be the one with the open windows where the bright green curtains fluttered. There was a young girl in a blue overall working in the garden. That might be Effie Warren.

It was.

She was stooping beside the flower border that went from the door of the cottage to the gate, planting a row of bachelor's buttons. She looked up as she heard the click of the latch, and rose and came to him.

"Can you tell me which house Miss Warren lives in?"

"I'm Miss Warren. Are you Mr. Waterlow?"

"Yes. Rosalind asked me to call."

"I know. She told me you were coming. And as there isn't anybody else to come I knew it must be you. I can't shake hands. I'm too grubby."

She held out her small palms, dry and grey-brown with earth.

"Don't stop," he said.

"Do you mind my sticking in these three, then I'll have finished?"

"Do. I'll look on."

"No. Don't look. I don't know how to plant things."

He could see she didn't. Her little hands were tender but incompetent.

"It's very hard," she said. "I love flowers, but they won't grow for me. They won't do anything."

"Because you touch them as if you were afraid of hurting them."

"I am afraid. And my funk gets into them and the poor things curl up and die."

"You should do it callously, as if you didn't care."

"But I do care, awfully."

"You care too much. Let me plant them for you. May I take them up and put them in again?"

"Oh, would you? That *would* be kind!"

He pulled them all up and planted them again, firmly and efficiently.

"Oh," she said, "they're sitting up already and looking

happier. I wish I could make them look like that. How do you do it ? ”

He showed her how.

“ And now,” she said, “ you’ve made your hands all dirty and we’re going to have tea. Come in and see my funny little house.”

He followed her into the funny little house, into a room that only just held a small round oak table and three high, rail-backed, rush-bottomed chairs.

“ This,” she said, “ is the dining-room.”

She left him and returned with a basin, a jug of hot water, a clean towel and soap. She waited while he washed his hands and dried them ; and there was something about her and her waiting, something patient and kind and gentle, that made him feel as if he had known her a long time, as if he had known her face.

Effie’s face was shaped so that in front her chin was full and round ; sideways, it sloped—you couldn’t say it retreated—in a delicate curve to her white throat. Her mouth was rather wide and full, lifted in a bow in the middle that gave it a look of great sweetness. And somehow her little nose, broad and low, repeated the innocent bow of her mouth with its tip and nostrils. Effie’s colours were faint ; her mouth and the flower of her cheeks thin shell-pink on milk-white, faint gold in her fawn hair where it was turned back above her ears, and at its roots, and on the crest of the thick roll at the back of her head. All this faintness gave a vivid accent to her black eyebrows and lashes and to the dark gentian blue of her eyes.

When their hands were clean again she began to get tea ready going to and from the little kitchen at the back.

“ Can’t I help ? ” he said.

“ Yes, if you will.”

It was like going to see Linda, putting the kettle on, and cutting the bread and butter, in her rooms in Tavistock Square. Only Effie was neater and more thorough, more seriously given up to the business of tea.

They sat down at the little table in the absurd dining-room where they could hardly move.

“ I’m excited,” she said. “ I’ve never had a house before, and I can’t get over it, and you’re the first person that’s come to see me.”

He said he was glad he was the first. And they talked about gardening. Effie wanted blue lupins and larkspurs and

anchusa to stand at the back of the border against the green paling. And night-scented stock under the windows so that she could lie in bed and smell it in the night. But she didn't know how she was to get them, or how they were ever going to grow if she planted them. And Arnold said he would bring her some lupins and larkspurs and anchusa from his mother's garden and plant them for her ; he thought he could make them grow.

"How kind of you ! When will you come ?" she said.

Would next Saturday afternoon be too soon ? Or I could come any evening, after eight." And they settled it that he should come on Monday evening.

"I can't wait," she said. "I want to see them growing."

After tea she took him up a narrow twisted staircase to her study, a slightly larger room, looking out, too, on to the garden. There was a small oak-table in it, and a couch covered with green cotton stuff on one side, and on the other a table with a green cloth and a typewriter. A book-case stood beside it. There were strips of straw-coloured Indian matting on the floor, a blue and green rug by the fireplace, bright green curtains at the window ; the woodwork was painted elder flower white against ivory white walls.

"May I look at your books ?"

"Do."

He knelt on one knee before the bookcase. She had all his poets, Keats and Shelley and Wordsworth, and Browning and Swinburne and Rossetti, and William Blake. She had Gilbert Murray's translations of Euripides, and Wharton's Sappho, and Jowett's Plato, *The Republic*.

"Euripides ? And Sappho ? And Plato ?"

"Only translations. I don't know Greek. Do you ?"

"Fairly well."

"I wish I did. But I'm dreadfully uneducated."

"It doesn't look as if you were."

"I've got one or two books. But I can't get any more, and if I could there'd never be enough."

"I say, you've got Walt Whitman."

"Yes. I adore him. Don't you ?"

"I don't know him. But I want to."

"Take him. Take anything you like. But I don't suppose I've got anything you haven't."

But she had. She had Henley and Davidson, and Ernest Dowson and Francis Thompson, and she wanted to lend them all.

And as they talked about them he saw the flash of her little shining mind, eager, excited.

He stayed another hour ; and when he had watered the bachelor's buttons he went away with Walt Whitman in his pocket.

" Tears ! tears ! tears !
In the night, in solitude, tears,
On the white shore dripping, dripping, sucked in by the sand,
Tears, not a star shining, all dark and desolate,
Moist tears from the eyes of a muffled head :
O who is that ghost ? that form in the dark, with tears ?
What shapeless lump is that, bent, crouched there on the sand ?
Streaming tears, sobbing tears, throes, choked with wild cries ;
O storm, embodied, rising, careering with swift steps along the beach !
O wild and dismal night storm, with wind—O belching and desperate !
O shade so sedate and decorous by day, with calm countenance and
regulated pace,
But away at night, as you fly, none looking—O then the unloosed ocean
Of tears ! tears ! tears ! "

It was Linda, Linda crying in the night, crying for her baby, crying for her lover. He could never read Walt Whitman without thinking of Linda. He went on reading.

And now he knew the strange new beauty, the beauty of unrhymed, unfettered verse, the large, stretching rhythm, the rich freedom ; hard, clear simplicity, the undecorated, naked phrase. Verse that lifted you on a long, elastic, perpetually moving wave that gathered and swelled and never broke, never scattered in foam. Something immense and powerful that held him and wouldn't let him go. All the things he loved, freedom and truth and courage, and the passionate adoration of life.

Faint pencil lines showed him where Effie's mind had gone before him, adoring what he adored. He followed and found that he could trust her ; she marked down, infallibly, the best. She went before him with her shining, alert, adventurous mind.

He was glad that he would see her again so soon.

Monday evening came, he went over with his bundle of lupins and larkspurs and anchusa. He planted them in Effie's garden while Effie looked on. She could hardly believe that she was going to have flowers that would really grow.

They went in. She made coffee and they drank it, sitting together in the twilight of May.

" I haven't brought back Walt Whitman."

" Of course not. Keep him as long as you like."

" Shan't you want him ? "

"Not yet. I know such a lot of him by heart. I can say it over to myself in my head. Did you read 'Whispers of Heavenly Death'?"

"No."

"It's one of the most beautiful."

"Say it."

And simply, as if she were speaking to him, she said *The Last Invocation*.

"At the last, tenderly,

From the walls of the powerful fortress'd house,

From the clasp of the knitted locks, from the keep of the well-closed doors,

Let me be wafted.

"Let me glide noiselessly forth ;

With the key of softness unlock the locks—with a whisper

Set ope the doors, O soul

"Tenderly—be not impatient,

(Strong is your hold, O mortal flesh,

Strong is your hold, O love.)

"I'm glad he didn't make it rhyme, aren't you?"

"Yes. It's perfect."

He went again and again, on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, or in the evenings of other days when he had no reviewing. He took back Walt Whitman before he had done with him, in order to see Effie again. He borrowed Henley, and took him back before he had done with him, for the same reason. After that it was Davidson and Ernest Dowson and Francis Thompson, they were so many pretexts for seeing Effie.

They sat together, turning over the books they both knew, showing each other the things they loved best, finding out, every time, that they loved the same things. Effie knew the cave of the shadows in the *Republic*. For years their minds had been going together in the same places. He had never come across a mind that went with his so surely and swiftly. There was Winifred, and there was Mary Unwin, but they had only gone with him a little way. Effie never tired. She plunged with him into metaphysics. He brought her his Berkeley and Spinoza and Schopenhauer. She said she liked things she didn't understand. He knew that she was glad to let her mind go with his all the way.

"It was nice of Linda to make you come and see me," she said. "What did she say about me?"

" Oh, that you were frightfully intelligent and you wouldn't bore me."

" She thought you'd be afraid. You weren't, were you ? "

" Not a bit."

" I was, horribly. After what Linda said about you."

He asked in his turn, " What did she say ? "

" She said you were furiously clever and that there wasn't anything you didn't know."

" What rot ! Well, that's only Linda."

" Oh, she thinks no end of you."

" Does she ? "

They looked straight at each other, and he knew that for a moment she had forgotten what had passed between him and Linda, and that now suddenly she remembered and was frightened, as if she thought that she had hurt him.

" Do you mind talking about her ? " she said.

" I don't think I mind *you* talking about her."

" You needn't. I adore Linda. She's so absolutely brave and honest and unselfish."

" I know she is."

He found himself mastered by an overpowering desire to know about Linda.

" Do you think she's happy ? " he said.

" Do you want her to be happy ? "

" Yes."

" You would. I think she is, most of the time. And the times when she isn't don't matter to her. She only remembers the happy times. I think that's wonderful of her. I should never forget if it was me."

" Nor I."

He had never forgotten. The pain she had made him suffer was present to him that minute while he talked to Effie. After all, he couldn't talk about Linda without pain.

Effie saw that it hurt him. She got up and went out to make the coffee. When they had drunk it they talked again about their books till it was time for him to go.

When the midsummer holidays came he asked his mother and Charlotte to call on Effie Warren.

They went. Charlotte said that Effie was quite intelligent, and his mother said she had a pretty little face. Though what Arnold wanted with her she couldn't think.

" I want to talk to her," he said.

He didn't know whether Effie's face was pretty or not ; he

only knew he wanted to look at it again and again, and more than anything he wanted to talk to her.

He had heard again from Rosalind.

" DEAREST ARNOLD,

" How do you like my little Effie ? She's a darling, isn't she ? You seem to have been most awfully good to her. I wonder if you could do a bit more ? If you could get her some work ? She does typewriting, when she can get it, but that isn't often. She wants a regular job in some office. Do you think Uncle Albert would take her ? I wish you'd ask him. If she can't get anything she'll have to give up and go and live with her brother and sister-in-law in Birmingham, and she'd hate it. The sister-in-law's a beast, she'd worry her and work her to death and never pay her.

" Thanks ever so much.

" Your loving

" LINDA."

As it happened, Mr. Godden had been talking to him about getting a woman secretary for his own office.

The next morning he asked Mr. Godden.

" Can she type well ? " Mr. Godden said.

" Beautifully."

" Does she know shorthand ? "

" I believe so. If she doesn't, she'll learn it in no time."

" How did you hear of her ? "

" Through Rosalind and Mary Unwin."

" Is she steady ? She won't want to flirt with the junior clerks, will she ? "

" Oh, Lord, no ! Not that sort."

" Well, tell her she can come along to-morrow and try it for a week."

And Effie Warren went along to the office in Tower Street and tried it, and stayed.

There was one train that Arnold always had to catch in the morning so as to get to Tower Street by nine o'clock, and as Effie had to catch it, too, they nearly always went up together. And sometimes they had lunch together, and sometimes he came back with her, and took her home. The summer passed, and the autumn and winter, and the spring of the new year. And it was as if he had known Effie and gone about with her all his

life. There was something about her that he couldn't help loving, something that reminded him of Rosalind ; but when he thought of Rosalind he told himself that it was Effie's mind that he loved, not Effie.

XXXV

EFFIE'S mind.

At first it surprised and enchanted him by its likeness to his own. But when he knew it better he found a stronger fascination in its unlikeness. They might travel the same road, but as often as not they were going in opposite directions, and each had to turn clean round to meet again. There was nothing tame and subservient about Effie's mind. It went its own way in utter freedom and disregard of contradiction. It would have none of Arnold's idealism ; argue as he would, it remained inflexible.

" But think, Effie, think."

" I am thinking."

" Well, surely it's a more reasonable theory than any other."

" It is. That's what I dislike about it," said Effie.

" I can't stand an unintelligible world," said Arnold.

" And I can't stand an intelligible one. Your idealism makes everything so beastly clear that there's no mystery left anywhere."

" Oh, isn't there, though ! "

" Not if you make out that everything's just consciousness with nothing else behind it."

" But there *is* something else behind it."

" What ? "

" Spirit. God. Whatever it is that *is* conscious. That's mysterious enough for anybody."

" Not for me. I like a little uncertainty. You're so cock-sure about consciousness."

" You must start with something you're sure about. I'm not cock-sure about God. That's where the mystery comes in."

" Yes. But it's a mystery you've made for yourself, not a mystery you've found. If you tell me that table only exists when somebody's looking at it—God or anybody—that explains it away, and there's nothing mysterious about that table. But

if it exists on its own, outside all minds and when nobody's looking at it, then it's utterly mysterious and utterly fascinating. The whole world's mysterious and fascinating. Existence is *the* mysterious thing. To think that a pebble, a grain of sand, has a hard, unbreakable *reality* of its own, that somehow it came to *be*, and that with all our thinking we'll never really know how."

"But it's a stupid mystery. If things exist whether minds are knowing them or not, how on earth do we get to know them?"

"I don't know, Arnold, and I don't want to know. I just want to look and wonder and feel their mystery. They must be there to be known. I can't bear to think that stars and tables and chairs, and the flowers in my garden, aren't real, that your body isn't real, and that you and I are only ghosts moving about in each other's minds. I hate it most of all when it's you. I want you to be real."

"But they're ten times more real that way. If they're not, memories aren't real. And you wouldn't say my memory of you isn't. Why, Effie, it might be more indestructible than what you call the real you. If never changing's a test of reality. The real you may change, it may go back on me, it may give me up; but my memory of you, of this moment that I'm talking to you, the moment that's gone now, will never change. I shall always have it when you've gone. And if you were consistent, you'd have to say it isn't real because it only exists in my mind. Why, if I could think of you for ever you'd be immortal."

"I'd be immortal," said Effie, "but I'd be unreal."

"But a memory isn't unreal, it belongs to something that has been once in time, and that mind eternalises. And time's only your way of being conscious of things."

"But if you're conscious of them they must be outside your consciousness."

"Now you're fooling with space, Effie, as you fooled with time."

"I don't see that I'm fooling with either. I want space and time to be real and mysterious, too; and they're not if they're just kinds of consciousness. I've as much right to turn the universe inside out as you have to turn it outside in."

"But we've nothing but consciousness to go by, and consciousness says nothing about the independent existence of things."

"Yours mayn't," said Effie, "but mine does."

"It doesn't. You only think it does."

"There's another thing," said Effie. "Your theory mashes everything up into a oneness. And I like to think that things are themselves and different, and that there are lots of them."

"So they are different. They're only one when you get to the Absolute, to God."

"But on your own showing your old Absolute isn't one. At least he's so bored with being one that he's jolly soon had to make himself everything that is."

"He couldn't be one unless he was different too. If I say you're the same Effie to-day that you were yesterday, that means there are two Effies that I recognise as the same. You're the same because you're different."

"Well, but things that are identical with the same thing are identical with one another; so, if you and I are both identical with God we're identical with one another. Which," said Effie, "is absurd."

"It doesn't follow. My thoughts can be identical with my consciousness without being identical with one another. If you want mystery you've got it."

"But it's what I call a silly mystery. Not stupid—silly. You've made your mystery for yourself with thinking about God. It's not like my mysterious flower."

"Your flower isn't less mysterious because its real life is God."

"It's real life is itself," said Effie. "I can stand Spinoza's God, because he wasn't nothing but thought, and he didn't muddle up mind and matter inside himself, and because he had an infinite number of attributes that weren't either, and you can go on wondering what on earth those attributes were and getting excited about them. But your old Hegel doesn't leave you anything to wonder at, except how anybody could be such an ass."

"I've felt like that about him myself."

"Of course you have. And you've felt like me about real things. You're much more exciting than your philosophy, Arnold; I couldn't stand you if you weren't."

"But Effie, you keep on talking as if there were no such thing as truth, as if there was nothing but a personal preference."

"Isn't that what it comes to? I've got a personal preference for being really myself; you've got a personal preference for being swallowed up in God."

"And I suppose we shall go on contradicting each other till I am."

"Do you mind my contradicting you? Do you want me to agree with you all the time?"

"Oh Lord, no! It's much more amusing when you don't. You ought to talk to Wilfrid Godden. *He'd* agree with you."

"I'd much rather talk to you. I do believe you care more about truth than I do. And you've taken more trouble to get at it."

"I don't know that I've got at it, Effie. We're both making shots in the dark. Very likely you've made a better hit than I. There's no sort of cock-sureness about me, if you only knew."

They sat silent. Then, suddenly and impetuously, Effie spoke.

"Arnold—you don't really think that I'd go back on you, that I'd give you up?"

"No, Effie. No. What makes you say that?"

"What you said just now. You said it as if it might really happen."

"I said it because it had really happened. I wasn't thinking of you."

"You were thinking of Linda. Oh, Arnold, I can't think how she could give you up! I can't *think* how she could."

Her eyes looked at him, large through a lens of tears. Tears weighed down her eyelashes and fell. A strange end to a metaphysical argument.

Effie got up suddenly and turned away, frightened. And he knew that there was something in Effie that was deeper and stronger than her mind.

Something deeper and stronger than Effie's mind. Something that was afraid and had hidden itself behind Effie's mind for shelter. She had run from him, throwing out her web of quick, bright thoughts to mislead him, to make him believe that this relentless thinking thing was the real Effie.

He was wiser than he had been, he knew more about women than he had known in the days when Winifred had shown him her poor secret and he hadn't seen it, he hadn't understood the signs. All his life with Rosalind came between then and now; from his knowledge of Rosalind he knew that Effie loved him. Her sudden tears had shown him and the fright that came after, when she had turned from him so that he shouldn't see her face. She might have been sorry for him and afraid because she had

let him see it, but the look in her eyes when she came back to him was not pity ; it was the look that Linda's eyes had had when she loved him ; eyes large and darkened, dark, wide-open gates that let longing through. Only Effie's longing was young and innocent and unaware. She didn't know yet that she loved him.

And in the same moment that he knew this, he knew that what he was beginning to love was not Effie's mind, but Effie. He knew where he was going ; they were going together, he and Effie, and he knew what the end would be if they went on. He said to himself that they were only at the beginning, and there need never be an end ; he could stop himself if he tried ; he could make Effie stop, when she saw that he wasn't going any further.

For as yet he didn't want to love Effie, and for Effie's sake he didn't want Effie to love him. He wanted to love Rosalind and nobody but Rosalind, to keep faithful to her, to wait for her till she came back. It wasn't as if he could have divorced Rosalind and married Effie ; and even if Effie cared enough to give herself to him as Rosalind had given herself to Schoonhoven, he couldn't live with her, he couldn't make a home for her ; he had no money ; there was nothing he could do for Effie.

As it was, his poverty thwarted him at every turn. He wanted to give Effie pleasures, and he had to think twice before he asked her to have lunch or tea with him ; because he had taken her three times to the play, he had had to go without a necessary new hat for a whole year. And Effie loved the country, loved it passionately, she loved long walks into the heart of it on a Saturday or Sunday, going out beyond the suburbs by train ; and there were times, many times when he couldn't take her, because at the end of the week he found himself without the price of a railway fare. At these moments he almost hated Richard. If it hadn't been for Richard he could have done all the things he liked doing, and done them with Effie, instead of meeting her proposals with his miserable, " I'm sorry, I'm afraid I can't." He could see that Effie's idea of perfect happiness was this going off together into the woods and fields.

Poor little Effie. He knew why she was so happy. And he had got to make an end of her happiness. An end of coming to see her ; of the long, exciting talks, an end of travelling in the same railway carriage, of lunching and having tea with her, of taking her to plays, an end of going off together into the woods and fields. An end of everything.

He could see nothing between this complete renunciation and asking Effie to give herself to him. And he had made up his mind that he wasn't going to ask her. He wasn't going to put Effie in Rosalind's place. His unending love for Rosalind fought with his love for Effie which was, as yet, the weaker, being only at its beginning, without a long life in his memory.

And through his love for Effie, beaten down and denied, his love for Rosalind rose up, stronger than ever, to torment him ; and through his torment his love for Effie was roused to restlessness and pain. The two loves, both denied and beaten, came together, inflaming and increasing each other. He was divided between them, yielding at first to Rosalind and struggling against Effie, until Effie, by the sheer intensity of his resistance, gathered strength, and time made for her a place in his memory, image upon image of Effie obliterating image upon image of Rosalind. Time, empty, joyless time, was on Effie's side. To go without seeing Effie was not the way to stop loving her ; unseen, she inhabited his mind, she haunted and possessed him till his longing for her became unbearable. To go to her, to talk to her, to hear her saying things, to see the bright flash of her mind. Yet he knew that none of these things would satisfy him. He didn't want Effie's mind ; he wanted Effie.

There were moments when he came on her in Mr. Godden's office, when he passed her in the corridors or on the stairs ; they passed with a tense smile and a quick greeting, letting each other go ; for Effie never stayed to speak to him. He thought : She knows. She knows. She's trying not to make it hard for me.

He wondered how hard it was for Effie. Lately, in their casual encounters, he saw that she was white and thin, there were hollows under her cheekbones and dark smears under her eyes. Her eyes were miserable. He knew that wounded look ; it was the look that Rosalind's eyes had when Schoonhoven left her. He—*he* had done that to her.

He mustn't think of it. He wouldn't think of it. He tried to forget Effie's white, unhappy face.

Two months passed ; it was mid-June ; for three days he had not seen Effie at all. On a Thursday morning Mr. Godden called him into his office.

"Do you know what's wrong with Miss Warren ?" he said.

"Wrong ? No, why ?"

"Because she hasn't been to the office for three days. She wrote on Monday to say she was ill and couldn't come. I

thought you might know how she was, as you're always seeing her."

"I don't know. I haven't seen her for months."

Mr. Godden turned on him a queer, shrewd look. "You haven't? Well, I think you ought to go."

"I oughtn't. But I'll go all the same. I'll go this evening."

"Why did you say you oughtn't to?"

Arnold didn't answer, and Mr. Godden kept on looking at him shrewdly and queerly.

"I see," he said at last. "Well, if you feel like that about it, you'd better keep away."

"I've been keeping away for two months, sir, and it's no good. It's too late."

"No. No. Leave the poor child alone, Arnold, if you're not sure of yourself. Leave her alone."

"I *have* left her alone," he said bitterly.

"It's as bad as that, is it?"

"It's as bad as that."

"What are you going to do about it?"

"What *can* I do?"

"Nothing, unless——"

"Unless what?"

"Unless you divorce Linda and marry her."

"I shall never divorce Linda. Linda knows that. If she'd come to me now, I'd take her back. I promised."

"Well then, it's a hopeless affair. Keep out of it."

"And what's to become of Effie?"

"Effie must get over it. Other girls have had to. It's no worse for her."

He was thinking of Winifred.

"I didn't mean this to happen, sir. I never thought it would."

"No," said Mr. Godden. "You wouldn't. Tell you what I'll do. I'll ask Effie to come and stay with us at Highgate. Mrs. Godden and Winifred'll nurse her up a bit and look after her."

"It's awfully good of you, sir."

But he knew it would be no use. Effie would go to the Goddens and come back whiter and thinner and more unhappy than ever. It was too late. The thought of Effie's illness frightened him; all his resolutions went down before it. It was all very well to say "Keep out of it." He couldn't keep out of it if he tried. And he no longer wanted to keep out of it. He

wanted to go into it, deeper and deeper in, to have happiness in having Effie. More than anything he wanted Effie to have happiness. He wanted to undo what he had done to her, to hold her in his arms and make her well.

He went to see her that evening after eight.

XXXVI

Mrs. BONE, the charwoman, opened the door to him. She told him that Miss Warren was upstairs, lying down. She would see if he could go up to her.

Yes. Would he please go up. He knew which room it was ? Miss Warren was all alone. Mrs. Bone supposed he knew she had been ill.

As he went up the narrow, twisted stairs he heard the house door slam. The woman had gone. There was nobody in the house but he and Effie.

Effie sat on the couch, very straight and still, looking towards the doorway. When he came to her she rose and he saw her body quiver. Her eyes quivered as they looked at him ; her voice quivered as she spoke.

" I thought you were never coming again," she said.

" So did I. But I've come."

" What made you come ? "

" Not seeing you. Effie—I couldn't stand it any longer. And they told me you were ill."

" Yes, I suppose I've been ill."

" What is it ? "

" I don't know. I've been tired, so frightfully tired ; and my heart does funny things."

" What does it do ? "

" It beats all anyhow, in jerks ; all the beats going together at once, and then stopping."

" Have you seen a doctor ? "

" Yes."

" What does he say ? "

" Oh, I don't know. Nothing much. Don't look so unhappy, Arnold. I shan't die of it."

" No," he said fiercely, " you shan't die. I won't let you."

She smiled faintly. She had sat down again on the couch.

making a place for him beside her. She sat straight and still, not looking at him, her eyes fixed on the door as if she saw something going from her, going away. He knew she must have sat like that many times since he had left her, hypnotised by her own unhappiness, staring at the shut door.

"Effie—have you been unhappy?"

"Yes. Awfully."

"Was it because of me?"

"Yes," she said. "I thought you weren't coming again."

She turned slowly round and looked at him. Her eyes were still heavy with unhappiness and dark with hidden desire.

"Don't you know why I didn't come?"

"No. I was afraid you thought I was horrid."

"You? *You*?"

At that, suddenly, he took her in his arms. Her face was turned up, tilted backwards, under his, her eyes, clear gates of love, thrown open, widening darkening. They closed suddenly, as his face came down on hers and their mouths touched and were pressed together, close. He kissed her white eyelids.

Then his eyes closed, too, to shut out the sight of her: to feel nothing but the pressure of her face on his.

They came apart with eyes wide open, looking at each other.

Effie spoke first. She was back in the instant before.

"You *don't*? You don't think I'm horrid?"

"What's put that into your dear little head?"

"Your not coming. I thought you were trying to stop me."

"You darling! I was trying to stop myself. Didn't you know, didn't you know I love you?"

"Not when you kept away."

"I had to. I wanted you so much that I couldn't trust myself to see you. I couldn't tell you."

"Why couldn't you?"

The bright evening had gone from the window-panes. Effie's face glimmered white in the white twilight of the room.

"Because I can't marry you, Effie. I won't divorce Linda. I promised her I wouldn't."

"I knew you couldn't marry me. But you wanted me, you wanted me. Did you come because you wanted me?"

"Yes."

"Then—does anything else matter?"

"Not to me. But I've no business to ask you to give yourself to me."

"Why not? Do you think there's anything I wouldn't give you?"

Her voice, which had been hushed and grave, rang suddenly clear, with a sweet, passionate vibration.

"It wouldn't be fair to you, darling. It's too big a risk."

"I don't see any risk. But if I did, I wouldn't care."

"I haven't told you. I promised Linda if she came to me I'd take her back."

"And if she doesn't come——"

"If she does, I should have to leave you, Effie. We might only have a year or two together. Perhaps not that."

"I don't care. If we only had a day—we should have had it. Arnold—why shouldn't we?"

"Why shouldn't we? If we could go on. But if we can't, I couldn't stand your being hurt."

"Can't you see it would hurt me more to give you up?"

"Would it, Effie? Would it?"

"You know it would. You know it *has*."

"I oughtn't to have let you care for me."

"You can't stop me. I want to care for you, I don't mind if it does hurt."

"If you only knew how I want you——"

"I do know. You can't want me more than I want you."

"Then, Effie, you would——? You aren't afraid?"

"I'm not afraid of anything."

"You'd rather we were lovers even if it had to end soon?"

"I shan't think about the end. It may never come. If it does, I'd rather have you for ever so short a time than not at all."

"*Really* rather? You're quite sure? You know what it means?"

"It means we should be happy."

"For a little while."

"Well—we should remember."

"Yes. We should remember."

"Nothing matters if only I can make you happy. Are you sure I'll make you happy?"

"Absolutely sure."

"You won't go and be sorry afterwards and say you wish you'd never seen me?"

"I shall never be sorry afterwards."

"Not even if Linda comes back?"

"Not even if Linda comes back."

Her eyes shone at him through the white twilight.

" You're sure it isn't Linda you want, all the time ? "

" It was, but it isn't."

She stroked his hand that lay beside her on the couch. It closed on hers and held it.

" Do you want me to go ? "

His voice was hurried and thick and strained with longing.

" No." Her eyes were shining slits under dropped lids.

" When ? " he said, " when ? "

She didn't answer. She trembled.

He lifted her up ; she lay across his knees with her head on his shoulder and her arms clasped behind his neck.

" To-night ? "

Her arms tightened.

He looked at his watch. " It'll be dark soon."

" Very soon."

It was midnight before he left her.

XXXVII

HE was undressing when he heard a tapping on his door and his mother's voice calling, " Arnold—Arnold—are you there ? "

" Yes, mother, what is it ? "

" Are you in bed ? "

" I will be in another minute. Is anything the matter ? "

" I only wanted to know you were in. I sat up for you till past midnight."

" You oughtn't to sit up for me. I wish you wouldn't."

" Well, so long as you're safe in. Good-night."

" Good-night, mother."

He now realised the awful trouble and difficulty there would be in going to Effie. He had forgotten his mother's irritating habit of sitting up for him, of worrying him to find out where he had been and what he had been doing. She sat up for him because she wanted to make him feel that he was an inconsiderate brute for being late, and that after ten o'clock every hour he stayed away was paid for by the loss of his mother's peace and rest. If she didn't sit up she would lie awake listening for the sound of his coming in. And it was always, " Why are you so late ? Where have you been all this time ? I'm tired out with waiting for you." She knew that six nights out of seven the fear of keeping her up would bring him home to her by ten o'clock.

Long ago she had established this tyranny.

Richard used to stay out all night, and Richard's mother had gone to bed comfortably at ten, and nothing had been said. Richard had been supposed to be staying innocently with his friends. But whatever Arnold did must be looked into and questioned. He must learn that he couldn't do as he liked without making her suffer for his self-indulgence.

And if she knew that last night he had been with Effie——

At breakfast the next day Mrs. Waterlow made no reference

to Arnold's lateness, but the morning's silence gave him no security. The brief breakfast-time and Arnold's hurried departure for the City cramped her, and she was apt to save up unpleasant discussion for his return, when, with the whole evening before her, she could fairly let herself go.

Her pinched and sorrowful face over the tea-cups, her foot-tapping and small, irritated clatterings warned him that this evening he would not escape. He had begun to look on Mr. Godden's office as a blessed shelter where his mother couldn't get at him, but it was only a temporary one. He had not been back from it five minutes when she was ready for him. She had a full hour before dinner.

"Arnold," she said, "what made you so late last night?"

"Oh," he said, "I couldn't get away."

"Where were you that you couldn't get away?"

He hesitated, wondering whether it would be safe to say he had been with the Goddens. Safe or unsafe, he couldn't bring himself to lie to her; though he supposed that sooner or later it must come to that. He had no right to give away Effie's secret.

"You're not going to tell me?"

"I don't really see why I should, mother. Why do you bother me like this?"

"Because I'm your mother, Arnold. It's no use your trying to hide it from me. I know where you were. You were with that girl."

"Why did you ask me if you knew?"

His mother ignored the question.

"Supposing I wasn't with her?"

"You were. You took back that book she lent you. It's not here."

Arnold laughed. She had trapped him. "Why shouldn't I?" he said.

"If that was all, you could have come away in five minutes, instead of staying till past midnight."

"How do you know I was there all the time?"

"Because if you weren't, Arnold, you'd have answered me straight out at first, instead of standing there saying nothing."

"Doesn't it occur to you that I can't stand this eternal cross-questioning? You've no right to do it, mother. Can't you remember that I'm thirty-nine?"

"I do remember it. If you were a young man there'd be some excuse for you. But you're old enough to know that it

isn't right for you to be sitting up with Effie Warren till all hours in the night. What you can find to talk about I can't think."

"Don't think, mother. Much better not."

"You can't turn it off like that, sneering at me."

"I wasn't sneering at you, darling."

"You'll get her talked about. It isn't proper, Arnold. You know it isn't."

Arnold laughed again.

"Oh, laugh at your mother! But I'm right. It isn't fair to the poor girl. You're just doing your best to compromise her."

"Effie doesn't think she's compromised. She doesn't care."

"She ought to care, then. If she doesn't, she's as bad as you are. I daresay it's as much her fault as yours."

"You've no right to say that, mother."

"I must say it. No nice woman would allow it. It's not as if she was a child. She knows perfectly well what she's doing, and she knows you're a married man."

"A married man?"

"Well, it's worse than being a married man. If Linda was living with you, you might be safe. But you're in a very peculiar position, and you're putting yourself and that girl in danger."

Arnold was silent.

"You're playing with fire, Arnold. And you know it; and it'll be your own fault if you get burnt."

"It won't be Effie's fault."

"Oh, I wouldn't put it past her."

"You don't know anything about her, mother."

"I know quite enough. I can see she's met you half-way. You wouldn't go to her if she didn't want you."

"Then can't you see that it's Effie's affair and mine? Effie knows I can take care of her."

"Fine care of her you're taking, staying with her till past midnight."

Again he said nothing. He couldn't say that Effie didn't mind, since in his mother's eyes Effie's not minding was the essence of her offending. There was no way in which he could justify himself to his mother.

"It's no good your trying to find excuses for yourself or her. You know what I think of her."

"You've no reason to think it."

"You know what you'd think yourself if it was your sister Charlotte."

"I should think Charlotte knew her own business best."

"Go your own way. You saw the consequences when you married Linda. I warned you then as I'm warning you now."

"Thanks, mother."

That ended it for the time being. He spent the evening reading aloud to her. And the next night he went again to Effie.

"Effie," he said, "I don't know what to do about my mother. She found out that I'd been with you the other night, and she kept on worrying about it for hours. I hate lying about it, but I suppose I shall have to lie."

"Why should you?"

"Well, I can't very well tell her, can I?"

"Don't you want to tell her?"

"I wouldn't so much mind telling her about myself. I can't tell her about you."

"Why not about me? It's the same for both of us. I'd rather she knew. Anything's better than lying about it."

"You wouldn't mind her knowing? She'll think it pretty awful of us."

"I don't care what she thinks. I don't care what anybody thinks. It isn't our fault if we can't get married."

"It isn't."

"I hate to think of your having to lie because of me. That's the beastly part of it. If we once begin lying we'll never stop. I'd rather everybody knew. Wouldn't you?"

"Yes, Effie. If we're to be lovers let's be straight and honest about it. We won't cover it up as if we were ashamed of it. We're not ashamed."

"No. It's not as if we'd been cruel and made other people suffer. I don't believe Linda'd mind. She'd like us to be happy. When she sent you to me she must have known it would happen. I mean she must have known that I'd care for you."

"Would you mind her knowing?"

"Not I. I'd rather she knew."

"So would I, if it won't hurt her."

"It won't. I believe it'll be a sort of comfort to her. It'll make her feel better about Max."

"How about the Goddens?"

"You must tell *him*. If he fires me out, I can't help it."

"He won't do that."

"I'm sorry about your mother, Arnold. I'm afraid it'll hurt her horribly."

"It would if it had been Richard. But it's only me. And after all she's been expecting it to happen every day. And I shan't say anything unless she asks me."

"Perhaps she won't."

"I'm afraid she will. Mother never can leave a thing alone."

That night Arnold was home by ten o'clock. His mother didn't ask him where he had been. She knew. She had nothing for him but a look of cold, silent displeasure.

The next day, before leaving the office, he told Mr. Godden. He told him everything from the beginning to the end.

"Effie wanted me to tell you, sir."

"I'm sorry, Arnold. I was afraid this would happen."

"Why are you sorry?"

"Because it's the wrong thing, Arnold. I don't like to see you doing the wrong thing."

"It was the only thing. I couldn't let Effie suffer. I'd no right to be moral at her expense."

"Some people would say you'd been immoral at her expense."

"I don't know about 'immoral.' I had to think of Effie. She was ill. You know how ill she was, and it was just unhappiness. I had to end it. What would you have done, sir?"

"God knows! Perhaps what you've done. Perhaps I should have thought it wasn't fair to the woman. I don't know."

"I do. We went into all that. We had to make up our minds between being happy and being thought respectable. Effie doesn't care what people think."

"You ought to have cared."

"Cared for something that doesn't matter, and left her to be ill and miserable? If there's one thing in the world that matters to you, would you stop to think what people thought of you before you took it? And if I could give Effie the only thing in the world that mattered to her, do you think I'd let other people's morality stop me?"

"Other people's morality works fairly well on the whole. I think it's better to respect the marriage tie. But then, I never wanted to be unfaithful to Mrs. Godden."

"My experience of the marriage tie isn't calculated to make me respect it. As for morality, it was far more immoral of me to marry Linda than to go to Effie."

"Why?"

" Because Linda didn't want me and Effie did."

" Well, Arnold, I don't mean to preach morality to you. What are you going to do about your mother? Shall you tell her? "

" Yes. Effie wants me to. She wants to tell Linda, too."

" I must say you're pretty straight about it."

" What else could we be? "

" Well, it's going to be hard on your mother. You know that."

" I know that. But it would be harder on Effie to give her up. I can't sacrifice Effie to my mother. She'll get over it. I'm not Richard."

" No."

" By the way, sir, Effie rather thinks you'll want to fire her out for this."

" Fire her out? Poor little Effie! No. No. I'm not so moral as all that."

" Thanks."

" I don't approve of what you've done, Arnold, but it isn't going to make any difference to me, or Wilfrid. Only I shan't tell my wife and Winifred."

" You think it would make a difference to them? "

" It would make a difference to Winifred."

Mrs. Waterlow's silence concealed a secret, deadly intention. She waited till Arnold was late again. It was a Saturday; he was very late; he had been out all afternoon and evening with Effie in the country. From the look on his face when he started Mrs. Waterlow knew that he was going with Effie. And it was three o'clock in the morning before he came home. She had lain awake, listening for the opening and shutting of the doors, counting the strokes of the church clock.

She made up her mind to speak out. But not to Arnold, to Effie.

Her idea was to come upon Effie unaware at a time when Arnold would not be with her. She had to wait till Tuesday evening, when he was busy with his reviewing, too busy to know whether she was in the house or out of it. Besides, Mrs. Waterlow was in the habit of spending her lonely evenings with the wife of the Vicar of St. John's Church, and if Arnold thought of her at all, he would think that she was there.

She found Effie sitting on the mat of grass in her front garden. In the borders along the paling Arnold's lupins and larkspurs and anchusa rose up, piling their blue on blue.

Effie started—Mrs. Waterlow saw that she started—taken unawares, and came forward. They greeted each other as if no deadly purpose lurked in Arnold's mother's brain.

"Let me bring out another chair."

"No, my dear, I'd rather go into the house. I've got something to say to you that I can't say out here."

They went in and upstairs to Effie's study.

Mrs. Waterlow looked round the room, found a hard, upright chair and sat on it, refusing the seat on the cushioned couch that Effie offered her. She sat up very straight and stiff, trying to hide her agitation and betraying it by the uneasy tapping of her foot.

Effie gazed at her with a look of innocence and candour.

Mrs. Waterlow said it was a very hot day; she kept on looking round the room, and a little spasm of vexation passed over her face as if she had seen something that annoyed her.

"Do you mind the open window?"

"No, thank you. I'm quite accustomed to open windows. You've got a good many books."

"They're not all mine. Some of them are Arnold's."

"Oh? Arnold's? You are fond of reading?"

"Yes. That isn't what you came to say to me."

"You know what I want to say, then?"

"I'm not quite sure. Won't you say it?"

"I'm afraid I shall offend you."

"Don't be afraid. I'm never offended."

"Well, my dear, it's this: do you think it's wise of you to see so much of Arnold?"

"Wise? I don't think it's foolish."

"Do you think it's right?"

"Oh, right—absolutely right."

"Safe, then?"

"Perfectly safe."

"To have him here at night, sitting up till all hours? A married man, not living with his wife, and you a young woman? You must know it isn't safe—or right."

"I know it's right, and I don't care whether it's safe or not, if you mean what people'll think of it."

"I do mean what people will think of it. And I mean more. If you won't think of yourself, you might think of Arnold."

"I am thinking of Arnold."

"Then let me beg of you to give him up. Before it's too late—Effie. Don't make it hard for him."

"I'm not making it hard for him."

"Hard for him to be good."

"It isn't hard for Arnold to be good. He *is* good."

"I don't say he isn't. I don't say that anything has happened. But think of what may happen. Let him be faithful to Linda."

"Linda wasn't faithful to him."

"Don't make him as bad as she is. Don't, Effie."

Mrs. Waterlow began to cry.

"Don't encourage him to come to you. Don't keep him."

"I must keep him if he belongs to me."

"Belongs to you? What do you mean? Belongs to you."

"I mean it's too late, Mrs. Waterlow. It *has* happened."

"No. No. You don't know what I meant, or you wouldn't say that."

"I do know. I tell you it's too late."

"Do you mean that you—and he——?"

She couldn't say it.

"Yes," said Effie, "I do mean it."

Mrs. Waterlow kept on crying quietly. "It's not true," she sobbed; "it's not true."

"It is true. After all, it's what you thought would happen."

"I thought? How could I think such a thing?"

"But that's what you've been saying all the time."

"That you and Arnold—— That it really happened? I can't believe it *now*."

"You must believe it."

"How long has this been going on?"

"Three weeks next Thursday."

"You can sit there and tell me that? You're not ashamed?"

"I'm not ashamed, and I meant to tell you. Arnold meant to."

"I never heard anything so shameful. That you can talk of it—like that."

"Would you rather I lied to you and said it hadn't happened? Would you rather Arnold lied?"

"How many people have you told?"

"Two. Mary Unwin and Mr. Godden."

"Mr. Godden—— T-t-t. I suppose he approves of it."

"He doesn't. He's very sorry."

"And if you were a little sorrier it would be more becoming. There's no excuse for you. You were brought up like any nice,

well-bred girl, and yet you can commit this awful sin and think nothing of it."

"I can't think of anything but Arnold."

"Don't talk to me about Arnold. I can see very well whose fault it was. Arnold wouldn't have gone to you, if you hadn't made him, if you hadn't led him away. You saw his weakness and you worked on it. You were determined to get hold of him."

"No. It was simpler than that. We loved each other, that's all. Arnold isn't weak. He's strong. I wouldn't have loved him if he hadn't been."

"I don't call it love."

"Call it what you like. It is love. He wanted it. He was miserable. I've made him happy."

"Happy!" Mrs. Waterlow's mouth and nose curled with disgust.

"Yes, happy. Can't you see that he's happy?"

"I can see that you've made him as bad as you are yourself. You've taken my son from me and turned him so that he'll never be the same again."

Mrs. Waterlow's crying became violent.

"Oh, don't cry! I can't bear it."

Pity from Effie was intolerable. Pity from her son's mistress. Pride came to her and held down her sobbing. But her tears swelled in her worn eyelids and spilled themselves on her face. She left them there, refusing to acknowledge their existence.

And at the sight of the poor little proud, wet face Effie broke down.

"I'm sorry I've hurt you. I'm sorry," she said.

Mrs. Waterlow drew back as if she thought Effie was going to touch her, to touch her with her tainted hands.

She rose, stiffening. "I've been obliged to speak to you," she said. "It has been most painful. But I'll never speak to you again. I'll never see you again. Please remember that I don't know you."

"I won't forget it."

Effie opened the door and Mrs. Waterlow went out. She followed her downstairs and along the garden path; she opened the gate and Mrs. Waterlow passed through, without seeing her, without speaking to her, without knowing her.

Effie thought: "Anyhow, she's enjoyed that part of it."

When Arnold came back into the room he found his mother waiting for him and crying.

"What is it, mother?"

"What is it? You ask me what it is?"

"Yes. Why are you crying? What's happened?"

"I've been to see that girl, Effie Warren."

"I see. She's told you?"

"Yes. She's told me. Arnold, I couldn't have believed it of you."

"But mother dear, it's exactly what you did believe. It's what you warned me about. I was going to tell you."

"To tell me, indeed! You're no more ashamed than she is."

"No. I'm not ashamed. I'd have married Effie if I could have divorced Linda. As I couldn't, well, I wasn't going to let her suffer."

"Much better she should suffer than she should be what she is."

"You don't know what she is. She's the best and sweetest woman I've ever known."

"You think she's good and sweet because she's given in to you."

"Whatever she did I should think it. But I think it a thousand times more because she gave herself to me."

"You ought to be ashamed to talk about it. 'Giving herself' to you!"

"I tell you I'm not ashamed. You can't make me ashamed, mother. Being ashamed of myself would mean being ashamed of Effie."

"You ought to be ashamed of her, leading you into this awful sin."

He made a movement of impatience. She went on.

"It all comes of giving up your belief in God, Arnold. You had nothing to keep you from sinning."

"I don't feel as if I was sinning."

"Because you've killed your conscience with your unbelief."

"No, mother. Whatever I believed or didn't believe, I'd have done the same. I should be sinning if I was ashamed of what I've done, if I took your beastly view of it."

"How can you say such a thing to me? My beastly view."

"Well, isn't it? You take a thing that's absolutely clean and beautiful and sacred to me, and you expect me to be ashamed of it as if I'd been caught in some filthiness."

"What else is it, Arnold?"

"It's not that. It's not that. Don't you know what it is? Didn't you love my father? Have you forgotten what it felt like?"

"Your poor father never would have asked me to do what Effie's done, and if he had I wouldn't have given in to him."

"You might if you'd loved him enough, mother."

"No. However much I loved him, I wouldn't. I wouldn't have thought of my own happiness."

"Nor of his. You wouldn't have had the courage Effie had. Do you suppose Effie was thinking of her own happiness?"

"Of course she was. You talk as if happiness was the only thing that mattered."

"Her happiness is."

"You neither of you care how unhappy I am."

"I do care. I care awfully. I'm frightfully sorry you're unhappy; but I can't give up Effie and make her unhappy to please you."

"You'll not give up anything to please me."

"Anything. Anything but Effie."

"Your mistress must come before your mother."

"Darling, you're not reasonable."

"Because I don't give way to you in everything. But you were always like that, Arnold. You've given me more trouble and more sorrow than any of my children. Poor Richard would never have done anything like this. He had his faults, but they never hurt anybody but himself."

Arnold was silent. Somehow, under all her sorrow and indignation, he perceived a secret satisfaction. She was glad that he had fallen, that she would no longer be obliged to think of him as Richard's moral superior. Besides, he was an unbeliever, and an unbeliever could only justify himself by sinning, thus showing the abominable consequences of unbelief.

"I don't know how we're to go on together, Arnold."

"Nor I, mother."

"If you had an income you could live on, I wouldn't have you in my house while you're living in sin. But I suppose I must make a home for you. I can't leave you without a roof over your head."

He thought: "Poor darling, if she only knew!"

"If you want me to clear out, mother, I will."

"No. I'd rather you stayed than go goodness knows where. But remember, I won't have that girl in my house. And

things can never be the same between us until you've given her up."

"I'd give her up to-morrow if it would be good for her. But it wouldn't, so I shall stick to her." He rose wearily. She had worn him out. He had no more to say. "Good-night, mother."

She turned her head away, and he saw the deep repugnance of her look. He was back in his old unhappy childhood, in the night after he had played with the Listers, when she had charged him with a sin he had not committed. The sin she charged him with now was of the same order of uncleanness, and he was defenceless as he had been then. He might go on saying, "It's not that. It's not that," for ever, and she wouldn't believe him; he could never persuade her of his innocence. Uncleanness in her eyes was the unpardonable sin, and in her eyes he and Effie were unclean.

XXXVIII

WEEKS passed and there was no change in his mother's attitude. Morning and evening she met him with the same cold, hostile disapproval. Her little tender face had stiffened in its look of resentment and reproach. And when he would have kissed her she shrank from him in peevish disgust. He was to understand that the mouth that had kissed Effie's mouth was impure and that she refused to be polluted.

Inconceivable how she kept it up. It was " Good-morning, mother."

" Good-morning," when he appeared at breakfast. At bedtime it was " Good-night, mother."

" Good-night," her face stiffly averted.

He had left off kissing her. If he talked to her she returned some frigid and resentful answer.

" What have you been doing with yourself all day ? "

" What should I have been doing with myself ? "

Sometimes there would be an unmistakable reference to Effie.

Thus :

" Seen anybody to-day, mother ? "

" Who should I see ? "

" Don't people call ? "

" If they did I shouldn't care to see them."

" Why not ? "

" You know why."

" I don't. I can't see it. It's bad for you being all alone."

" I daresay. It's what I have to be. I must make up my mind to it."

" Of course, if you've made up your mind."

" I think the less you say about it the better, Arnold."

" You talk as if it was my fault."

" So it is your fault. And you know it. You've made me ashamed to look people in the face."

" Can't you forget it, mother, sometimes ? "

" I shall never forget it. I'm not one to forget."

She wasn't. She couldn't sit for an hour with him without showing that she remembered. That was his punishment, her remembrance. As long as he went to Effie there couldn't be any more happy communion between them. He must choose, she seemed to say, between his mother and his mistress. He could see she was trying to worry him into giving up Effie, trying to wear down his will. He left off talking to her. They sat together in a dreadful silence ; silence only broken by the vexed tapping of her foot and by her sighing. On her face for ever that look of implacable resentment and reproach.

They were like strangers in the house that she believed to be her own, making him feel that it was hers, not his, and that only in her mercy he was allowed to stay in it, in the house that was kept up by his perpetual self-denial and by the hard work of his brain. His innocent deception weighed on him like a crime. How would the little thing feel if she found out the truth ? What agony, what humiliation ! If she knew that, abominable as she thought him, he had been keeping her for years, that the clothes on her back and the food in her mouth had been given her by that polluted one ?

Mercifully she would never know. It wouldn't occur to her to suspect Richard of speculating with trust money, and she would never, never dream that Arnold would do what he had done ; any more than she dreamed that, night after night, he stayed away from Effie so that she might not be left alone, and that Effie had told him not to leave her. When he read aloud to her she listened with an air of stubborn and unbending incorruptibility, as if she said, " You may read to me all night, but you won't get round me that way." Her little hard, clipped, " Thank you," was all he got.

She knew the times when he went to Effie. He would come in and say good-night to her before he left and she would say, " Are you going to be late to-night ? " and he would answer, " Yes. Don't sit up for me."

She never did. She knew it was no use now. He had beaten down that tyranny. But her look was ready for him in the morning, implacable.

One night he said to Effie, " It's perfectly awful the way mother goes on about it. I can't think how she keeps it up."

" Does she make you awfully unhappy ? "

" She'd like to. It's our being happy together that upsets

her. If we were miserable and snivelling and repentant she wouldn't mind so much. She can't stand our enjoying it."

"Oh, Arnold, I'm so frightfully sorry for her!"

"So am I. But we needn't be. The funny thing is that she feels a sort of satisfaction in thinking that it's I who've come this awful cropper. And look how she takes it out of me."

"I know. I can't bear to think I've let you in for it."

"You haven't let me in. You've brought me nothing but happiness. It isn't our fault if mother doesn't like it. It isn't her fault either. She doesn't know what happiness is."

"Wasn't she happy with your father?"

"Not always. And she hasn't any idea how we love each other. She's forgotten what it feels like. She just thinks we're beasts."

"I know she does."

"It wouldn't be so bad if I hadn't got to live with her. That rubs it in. It means that every time I go to you she knows. But I can't leave her. She hasn't got anybody but me."

"No. You can't leave her. Oh, Arnold, what a life you've had! What an awful life!"

"Don't let's talk about it," he said. "I'm happy now. Happier than I've ever been."

Yes. He knew now that he was happier with Effie than he had been with Rosalind. In Rosalind's love there had been something violent and fierce that tore at him and left him no peace. In Effie's love there was stillness and rest. He had loved Rosalind suddenly, at first sight, and it was as if he had known all of her from the beginning and there was no more to know. And with all his love for her their minds had never met. He had loved Effie bit by bit, Effie's mind first, then Effie, finding no end to her. And her mind was joined to his mind as her body to his body, never to be put asunder.

July passed and it was August. And in August Charlotte came home for her midsummer holidays. Charlotte at forty-three had settled down in a self-satisfaction that nothing could disturb. Her figure had broadened and thickened; her pale face had a sallownish tinge; her flaxen hair had darkened. This older, plainer Charlotte carried herself with the same air of looking as you ought to look, of being as you ought to be. She was head of the Cambridge room in her College, and Charlotte's face and figure, her voice, her walk, her gestures, revealed her everlasting consciousness of being head. If it hadn't been for

her polite habit of condescension to her inferiors (and who are not my inferiors? Charlotte seemed to say), she would have terrified her mother. But this time Mrs. Waterlow and Charlotte were drawn together by their common reprobation of Arnold in his iniquity.

On the evening of Charlotte's arrival, through the folded doors, Arnold in the back room could hear his mother and sister talking together in the front room. He couldn't make out what they said, but from the hush of their shocked voices he gathered that they were talking about him. His mother was telling the whole history of him and Effie. He smiled to himself as he imagined with what gusto of satisfied self-righteousness Charlotte would listen. It had always been so when they were children: he could remember Charlotte in long drawers and flaxen pigtails, and her smug, pale face and its peculiar look of complacency when he was reproved for being naughty, the delight with which she would lift up her voice to tell what "he" had been doing. He wondered whether Charlotte would say anything to him about Effie.

She did.

He had come into the front room when his work was over. They stopped talking suddenly and their heads drew back apart. Mrs. Waterlow got up and went to bed. Her good-night was not quite so cold as it had been and she put up her face to be kissed. He could see that her conscience was uneasy at having talked about him to Charlotte. She had never talked to Charlotte about Richard; she had been too much afraid of her. She couldn't give Arnold up to her without remorse. She was trying to make herself feel better by that show of kindness.

Charlotte waited till the door was shut again; then she began.

"Mother's been telling me about you and Effie Warren."

"I thought she would. And you're going to tell me what you think of me."

"I am. I think you've behaved abominably."

"You would, Charlotte, you would."

"You can't say anything about Linda now."

"I don't want to say anything about Linda."

"I see no difference between you. I haven't got one code for the woman and another for the man. In fact, the man's worse, because he begins it."

"I'm glad you take that view of it."

"Don't imagine I'm condoning Effie's conduct."

"My dear Charlotte, I can't imagine you condoning anything."

"It's mother I'm thinking about, Arnold. I should have thought her life had been hard enough without your making it harder."

"I'm fearfully sorry for mother. But I can't live the life of a dear old lady, which is what she wants me to do."

"You might at least behave decently when you're living in her house, when she's helping to keep you."

He smiled. How Charlotte would hate it if she knew.

"I know," he said, "but I had Effie to think of as well as her."

"Can't you be honest and say you were thinking of your own pleasure before everything?"

"I wasn't. But if I was I don't see what business it is of yours."

"Mother's my business. She's my mother as well as yours, and I can't keep quiet and see her made miserable."

"Do you suppose I don't care? Do you suppose I'm not miserable, too, every time I see her? If she is miserable, she punishes me for it."

"You deserve to be punished."

"Do I? Look here, Charlotte, you're intelligent——"

"Am I? Thank you." She tossed her head and looked at him with superb arrogance.

"You're very intelligent. You'll admit that Effie and I were not beasts before this happened. You'll admit that we wouldn't have been beasts if we had got married. Do you mean to say that the mere fact that we weren't able to get married turns us into beasts?"

"You've read Kant, I believe?"

"Yes, I've read him."

He remembered the little girl proud of knowing the Athanasian Creed; she was there in the woman proud of knowing about Kant, glad to score off him through his cherished author. He knew what was coming. It came.

"Well, isn't it Kant who says, 'Act so that your conduct may become a universal rule?' Do you think your conduct should become a universal rule?" *Categorical Imperative.*

"I think that the feeling matters more than the bare act. In marriage or out of it, it's the quality of the love felt that matters. Kant should have said, Feel so that your feeling may become a universal rule. If everybody felt as Effie and I feel

there'd be no adultery and no divorce. And no need for marriage to protect people. You may say we've no right to anticipate the millennium, but that's about all you can say."

"I say it's casuistry, invented to justify your misconduct."

"Well then, let's take another line. Suppose—what I don't admit—that I've done wrong——"

"If you haven't done wrong Linda hasn't done wrong either."

"It's no satisfaction to me to think she has. But supposing we're all wrong together, there is such a thing as forgiveness and charity and understanding."

"You may ask for all that when you've given up Effie."

"Then there'd be nothing to forgive or be charitable about or understand."

"More casuistry."

"No, Charlotte. The fact is, you don't understand. You won't. You don't want to. Neither you nor mother. I'm talking to a woman who's forgotten and a woman who never knew."

He was aware that this was the way to make Charlotte hate him, to tell her there was anything she didn't know. She didn't answer him. All expression had gone from her face, even its arrogance. Charlotte's face was a smooth, sallow mask, defending her.

"What's the good of talking?"

"What indeed, Arnold? There's no common ground when I have principles and you have none."

She rose. He opened the door for her; he lit her candle; they said good-night. He watched her going upstairs to bed, her head held high, her thick body rigid. He thought of Charlotte in her nightgown, stretched out in bed beside her long pig-tail. She had never known what it was to love and to be loved.

And suddenly he was sorry for Charlotte because she had never known.

From time to time, in the two years of struggle that had followed Richard's bankruptcy, Arnold turned his mind to the hope Mr. Godden had held out to him, that he would some day be manager when Mr. Simpson left. After four years of waiting the event seemed further away than ever, and he had stopped thinking about it. It couldn't really happen. The spirit of enterprise had deserted Mr. Simpson when it should have driven him forth to seek fortune in a business of his own. Mr. Simpson stayed on and on and Arnold struggled. From time to time

Mr. Godden would say, " I'm sorry, Arnold, but I can't make him go," or, " God only knows when he's going."

At last, in the autumn of nineteen two, the spirit of enterprise seized on Mr. Simpson and he was to go at the September quarter, and Arnold was to be made manager in his place with a salary of five hundred a year.

On the strength of this prospect Arnold drew out fifteen pounds of his balance at the bank and took Effie away for a holiday in South Devon. Mary Unwin's sister had lent them her cottage at Sidmouth for a fortnight.

Their going off together shocked Mrs. Waterlow and Charlotte more than anything that had happened yet. It was bad enough of Arnold to go to Effie at Hampstead in the evenings ; still, after all, he only went three or four times a week ; there was something furtive and secret about his going, and it didn't last long ; he had to leave Effie when he would have liked to stay with her, so that it wasn't all pleasure, and his mother could always get at him and reproach him for it. But to go away in broad daylight, to live with Effie in a house for a fortnight, to make no secret of it, this was more abominable than anything he could well have thought of ; it was a flying in the face of all decency, a shameless flaunting of their sin.

" Are you going alone ? " his mother said. " Or is that girl going with you ? "

" Of course Effie's going with me."

" Oh," wailed his mother, " this is worse than anything ! "

" It's Mr. Godden's fault," said Charlotte. " He could have stopped it if he'd liked."

" How ? " said Arnold.

" By not giving you your holidays together."

" He's not inhuman. Why is going to Devonshire worse than anything else, mother ? "

" It shows how little you care, going off like that, openly."

" It's perfectly awful of you, Arnold," Charlotte said.

" I see, it's awful because it's open. It wouldn't have been so bad if we'd hidden away and lied."

" At least it would have shown a sense of decency," said his mother.

" It would have shown cowardice and nothing more. What you really mean is that it's awful because we're going to enjoy it so tremendously."

" I can't imagine what Miss Unwin's sister can be thinking of to let you have her house. For such a purpose."

" Anyhow, she can't think it's very awful."
He couldn't hide his delight at getting off.

The house stood on a hill, a mile out of the little seaside town. Effie cried out when she saw it. It was the dearest house she had ever seen. It stretched long and low on its terrace, and had a deep thatched roof, like a hat coming down over its eyes. A thatched verandah went round it, and four high French windows opened out on to the verandah, two on each side of the wooden porch, and above them a row of five low, latticed windows between the slopes of thatch. The nine windows stood wide open to the air, their dark green storm-shutters folded back against the cream-washed wall.

A narrow three-cornered grass garden sloped down from the terrace path, between the steep lane and the field. A pebble walk and a high border of ferns and flowers went beside it from the house to the wooden gate. In the hedge of the field an oak-tree leaned over the garden, making a black dappled shadow on the green grass.

Down below was the hidden road, and the valley, green fields and the bend of a white river. Beyond the valley the straight dark ridge of Muttersmoor, one end chipped off in a cliff, red on a blue sea, the other dropping down to the wide western doorway of Sidmouth Gap. Then, round-topped Cor Hill and Castle Hill with its spiked fir woods.

Black fir woods and the crimson bloom of heather, green fields and bright red patches of ploughed land, blue sky and a blue fragment of sea. Clean edges of the hills dark against the blue, all sharp and clear in the shining crystal air.

It was the morning of the second day.

Arnold and Effie sat on the edge of the verandah, happy, with stilled, satisfied senses, given up to the divine visible beauty of the world.

" Aren't you glad," she said, " that you've never seen it before ? That we're seeing it for the first time together ? "

" Yes. I'd forgotten there ever was a time when we didn't see things together."

" Only just a little bit of the first day gone. Yesterday doesn't count."

" Thirteen more whole days, Effie."

" Think of the happy people who can live here for ever."

" Would you like to live here for ever ? "

" With you ? "

" Yes, of course with me."

" Darling, it would be simply heaven. It doesn't bear thinking of. In thirteen days we shall have to go back to the office. Do you know that, Arnold ? "

" Do you hate the office, frightfully ? "

" Frightfully, don't you ? "

" Yes, I hate it. As much as I can hate anything that belongs to Godden. I'd loathe it if it wasn't for him."

" He does sweeten it somehow, the dear old thing."

" That reminds me, I haven't told you."

" Told me what ? "

" What's happened."

" *Has* anything happened ? "

" It's going to happen."

" And it's something nice. I can see by your face it's something nice. Tell me quick."

" I'm going to be manager."

" Oh—only that."

" Why, what did you think it was ? "

" I thought you were going to say you were giving it up and not going back again, ever."

" No. I can't give it up. I shall have to go there as long as I live."

" Poor darling, and you hate it so."

" Yes, and I've been at it twenty-five years."

" You haven't. You're only thirty-nine."

" I began when I was fourteen. In a wholesale cheese-monger's office."

" Oh, Arnold, you were a child ! How could they let you ? "

" Mother couldn't help it. We were horribly poor."

" But when you should have been running about and playing. If I'd been your mother I'd have gone out charing before I'd let you."

" I wanted to make things easier for mother."

" But you could give it up now, if you did more journalism. Why don't you ? You can get all the work you want, and you could easily earn two hundred a year that way. Couldn't you ? "

" Yes. But that wouldn't be enough."

" It would. I live on a hundred."

" You haven't got a mother to keep."

" To keep ? But I thought she'd got an income of her own ? "

"I have to make it for her, Effie."

"But why, why?"

He told her why. He told her about Richard and the Cræsus Mining Syndicate, and the Jobson's Reef Company, and the Bronzite Company, and the Britannia United Insurance Society, and about what he called his own "stiff job"; he told her, laughing, as if it was a funny thing that had happened to him. But Effie cried.

"Arnold—if you did all that for her, she ought to let you have a hundred Effies if you wanted them."

"She doesn't know, and I don't want her to. And if she did, she'd still think one Effie worse than a hundred Effies. You see, a hundred might be only a fantastic caprice, but one Effie's serious. I couldn't take a hundred down to Devonshire with me."

"Well, there's something in that."

"Do you realise what it means being manager? If it wasn't for that there'd have been no Devonshire. It means that we can do it all again next year, that we can go away for week-ends any time we like. It means that you needn't go to the office again, ever. I can look after you now, Effie."

"You shan't. I won't let you."

"But when you hate the office——"

"I don't hate it as much as all that. I'd hate far more not going when you're there. What with travelling together, and lunching, and having tea together, we see a lot more of each other than if I stayed at home doing nothing."

And nothing he could say could move her.

"We may have only a short time together," she said. "We must make the most of it."

"You said you wouldn't think about that, Effie."

"Well, I won't."

And the days went on. They walked, wet or fine, over the moors and along the high cliffs and through the woods and fields. They bicycled; they hired a boat and a fisherman and sailed about the bay. On warm days they lay out in the garden and Arnold read aloud and Effie listened. They were incredibly happy. Each day and each night was perfect.

They knew that they were safe, that their happiness could never come to an end through anything in themselves, only through some fate outside them. If Linda came back—— Even then, if their bodies were put asunder, their minds would be joined for ever by the incorruptible, immaterial tie. They

refused to think about the end. After all, Linda might never come back.

Arnold lay stretched out on the steep grass-plot of the garden.

A moment ago, Effie had lain beside him, close, holding his hand, her face turned towards him, her eyes looking into his. Her eyes had seemed nearer to him than her body. And he had desired her. She had got up and gone into the house, and instead of following her he had waited, spinning out his moment of desire. He was looking at the hills and the white, shining river. Nothing in his brain but the flow and beat of the dark, numbing wave of desire.

Suddenly something shifted in his brain, the wave drew back, and in an instant, a flash, everything changed. He saw the same hills, the same green fields, the same white river, but as if lifted to another level of reality, and shining with another light ; light intensely still, intensely vibrating. They were no longer spread out in space and time, but they stood as if inside his mind, in another space and in another time ; his mind held them, and was inseparably one with them. At the same moment he had a sense, overpowering and irrefutable, of Reality, no longer hidden behind them, but apparent in them, the strange secret disclosed ; Reality breaking through, shining through all the veils of sense ; Reality present before him and in him, and stretching beyond him, out of time and out of space, as it was in eternity.

God was here, made visible in the hills and the green fields and the white shining river. He was more aware of him, more certain of him than he was of his own existence, an intense awareness, an indestructible certainty. While he looked his whole being was filled with a poignant, exquisite and unearthly bliss. His desire of Effie passed into his desire of God, it was stilled and satisfied in the unearthly bliss. Then the whole vision went out like a light extinguished ; he saw the hills, the fields and the river as they had been before the flash came. He tried to recapture his sense of their divine reality, to enter again into their eternal life. But he couldn't. The divine thing had gone from him ; he only knew that it had been, and that it was still there, secret and unseen. Nothing could take from him his certainty.

And there was Effie coming down from the verandah, telling him that tea was ready.

"Effie, come here."

He tried to tell her what had happened.

"I can't give you my certainty. I can't make you believe that it really happened."

"I do believe it, darling. Only I don't know what 'it' is."

"You do know. You've felt it too. Do you remember telling me about your sense of mysterious reality, your 'mysterious flower'? Well, it was that. Nothing could have been more mysterious or more certain. It was as if I'd got clean out of myself into reality, into God."

"Yes. You knew the secret. And I don't want to know it. I want it always to be a secret. That's the difference between you and me."

"But that queer bliss, Effie. It was like nothing on earth."

"Oh—the bliss! That was you, Arnold."

"No, it wasn't me. If it was I should have had it before."

"I shall never have it," she said.

"You don't know, Effie. That's what I thought when Mary Unwin told me about it. She said it came with intense happiness."

"Then," said Effie triumphantly, "it was *me*."

"You were in it, but it was more than you."

"Arnold—you don't love it more than me?"

"You needn't be afraid. I can't separate it from you. You were *in* it."

"*That's* all right," said Effie. "And now let's have tea. God hasn't spoiled your tea, has he?"

"He hasn't spoiled anything."

"If it *was* God," said Effie.

But even Effie couldn't take from him his certainty.

Then gradually, as the days went on, the memory of his vision lost its sharp clearness; his bliss, so poignant and so exquisite, became a faint, meaningless reverberation. He doubted. He remembered how, when he was a child of four, he thought he had seen God at West Ferry, in the clouds and the sun. Was there anything to choose between the two visions? Wasn't the one as childish and insignificant as the other? Wasn't it all an illusion built up out of his desire for Effie? Was it anything more than the passion of the flesh, transfigured and glorified?

And his certainty rose up in him and answered : Transfigured and glorified by *what* ? Why and whence that divine, super-sensual quality, if it was not the passion of the flesh transcended—passed over, through its momentary suppression, into the passion for God ?

XXXIX

WHEN Arnold came back he found that his mother and Charlotte kept up their attitude of stern disapprobation. It was even intensified by time, as if with every day he had spent with Effie he had sunk deeper into sin. An exaggerated coldness marked their sense of his iniquity. They made no reference to his holiday, and when he began to tell them what a jolly place Sidmouth was they were silent and changed the subject as if he had touched on some indecency. He was to understand that he had polluted Sidmouth.

He thought : " What minds they've got. Can't they forget it for one minute ? "

He didn't know how he was going to endure this life with his mother, after Effie's tenderness.

He was about to leave them and shut himself up in the inner room, on some pretence of work, when Charlotte called him back.

" Don't go, Arnold, mother's got something to say to you."

" If it's to tell me what she thinks of me, I know what she thinks and I don't want to hear any more of it."

" It's something important," said his mother. " It's about the future."

" The future ? Won't it keep ? "

" No. It won't keep. Charlotte's going to-morrow. You know you haven't got any work to do. You're just trying to get away from me."

He turned back ; he drew himself up, bracing himself to bear it.

" Well, what is it ? " He sat down, resigned and patient.

His mother showed signs of embarrassment which made him wonder what she had to say. She wouldn't have been embarrassed if she had been going to pitch into him about Effie.

" I understand," she said, " that you're very much better off now ? "

" Yes. I am."

"How much better off?"

"Well, I shall have five hundred a year from Mr. Godden now."

"And you make a hundred by that writing?"

"About that."

"A large income."

"Quite enough."

"More than enough."

"I don't know about that."

"Really, Arnold, what have you got to do with it?" Thus Charlotte.

"That's got nothing to do with you."

"It's got something to do with *me*, Arnold," said his mother.

"I needn't feel responsible for you any more."

"You weren't responsible for me."

"You think so? Well, I was responsible for keeping up a home for you. But I'm not going on with it."

"You want me to clear out, do you?"

"It's your mother who will have to clear out. I'm going to give up the house and live with Charlotte."

"Do you want to live with Charlotte?"

"You've made it impossible for me to live with you, the way you're going on."

"I'm sorry, mother."

"I don't believe in your sorrow. If you were sorry you'd give it up. All the same, I wouldn't have left you as long as you couldn't do without me. You put me in a very painful position."

"How?"

"You know how. Either I had to appear to condone your conduct by living with you when you're going with that woman, or I had to turn you out of my house when you couldn't keep yourself."

"But I *was* keeping myself. How do you make out I wasn't?"

His mother was silent. She blushed. After all, she didn't like to remind her son that his payments had been inadequate. But Charlotte had no fine scruples.

"Really, Arnold," she said, "do you believe that a pound a week represented your share of the rent and the service and the upkeep, to say nothing of your board?"

Arnold, too, was silent; he, too, blushed as if he had been guilty of a meanness. Without telling the truth it was impossible to appear as anything but mean.

His mother, still blushing, defended him. "He paid for his board, Charlotte. He paid me all he could afford. He had expenses."

"Dear little mother! I'm sorry if it wasn't enough."

"It *was* enough. Anybody would think I was complaining of having to help my son."

"But you don't want to live with him?" he said.

"No, Arnold. I forced myself to live with you against my conscience, because it had to be done. We haven't made each other so happy that I care to go on. It's better that Charlotte and I should live together. Charlotte will look after me."

"She'd better," he said fiercely.

"You needn't tell me what I'd better do. I shan't make it impossible for mother to live with me."

"When are you going, mother?"

"Do you want me out of the house?"

"You know I don't."

"Well, I'm going back with Charlotte to-morrow. It's all settled. And now I'm going to bed. I'm very tired."

She went, dragging herself wearily. His heart ached for her, poor perverse little thing, making a martyr of herself and pretending that he had sacrificed her to Effie; he, who would have given up everything for her, except Effie. She wouldn't be happy; Charlotte would look after her all right, from a habit of rectitude, but she wouldn't make her happy. She would have to go Charlotte's way instead of her own way, and she would hate it. Charlotte would tyrannise over her for her good. The little thing would go frightened and unnaturally submissive, not daring to call her soul her own. She could domineer over her younger son, but her daughter, with her demure, polite efficiency, escaped her will.

He was alone with Charlotte.

"I hope you realise," she said, "that you're turning mother out of her own house."

"I realise that mother doesn't want to stay in it."

"To stay in it with you."

"With me, then. Anyhow she's going to please herself."

"No, Arnold, you're driving her. After living on her for years."

"Look here, Charlotte, I've had enough of this. When you say I didn't pay her enough you don't know what you're talking about."

"I know perfectly well. Mother had to keep up the house and pay the servants without any help from you."

"It's about time I told you the truth. Mother doesn't know—she isn't to know it—but, as a matter of fact, she hasn't kept up the house and paid the servants. I have."

"You? How do you make that out?"

"It's quite simple. Mother hasn't got a cent. Richard made away with all her capital more than two years ago, in rotten investments. I've been making up her income ever since. When I'd paid her three hundred a year out of a salary of three hundred and what I got for reviewing, you can imagine how much I had over for my board."

He watched Charlotte's face while she listened. Charlotte's face had an unmistakable look of disappointment and consternation. He could see she couldn't bear to hear of what he had done. It put her in the wrong. It upset all her adverse judgments of him, the judgments in which she had delighted; it made him difficult, a moral contradiction, incomprehensible to Charlotte. He could do all that, and yet he could live with Effie. He could live with Effie and yet he could do all that.

But she could rise to it. She could be generous; she could praise him.

"If you did all that, Arnold, I haven't anything more to say. It was magnificent."

"It wasn't. It was the least I could do."

"But, not to let her know——"

"What was the good of making her miserable, shaking her faith in Richard? It only means that the poor little thing thinks I was fool enough to lose fifty pounds a year for her. Mind you don't tell her, Charlotte."

"I shan't."

And he knew she wouldn't. It would give her no pleasure to talk about the thing that showed Arnold in so good a light, that silenced her criticism of him for ever.

He waited at home the next morning until his mother had gone. It felt like the morning of a funeral day, such sadness hung about her departure. Charlotte had the air of an undertaker, correct and decorous, secretly pleased with the affair, making arrangements for the disposal of the body. There was something that he had broken, that was dead to him and was putting itself away out of his sight. His mother went about with a dead, spent look, the infinite reproach of things broken and put away.

The cab had come for her.

At the last moment she relented; she threw her arms round

his neck and kissed him and clung to him, crying. It was one of those sudden returns of affection that came on her in times of unhappiness ; even in the unhappiness that he had brought on her she clung to him ; he could comfort her against himself. For a moment he held her tight, pressing her fragile, aging body that palpitated in his hands like a small, frightened animal. She was frightened at herself for leaving him.

Charlotte waited, impatient, unmoved by this tenderness.

"Come, mother ; we shall be late."

His mother's mouth opened slightly as if she would have spoken, but no words came. She gave a little gasp and a moan, and they parted. It had been raining. She went before him to the gate, trailing the tail of her skirt on the wet path, not caring. Charlotte hurried after her to lift up her skirt and give it into her hand. Her hand dropped helplessly and the skirt still trailed. She dragged herself up into the cab, and Charlotte stepped in after her.

Arnold shut the door of the cab. She looked at him out of the window, a worn, yearning look ; she flapped her hand ; the cab drove off and she was gone.

Arnold turned back into the house with a sick pang at his heart. Catherine, the servant, and old Martha stood in the hall, they looked at him with love and pity as they used to look at him, long ago, in his childhood, when he had been punished.

They were to follow his mother to Cheltenham when Charlotte had found a house there. He had to wait till they were gone before he could take Effie into his house.

One day the van came. It was still standing before the gate when he came home from the office. The Indian furniture was inside it, wrapped round with sacking ; he saw the tall green and white and gold what-nots and the bird of paradise chair being carried out. These things were so associated with his mother and with his childhood, that he had another, fainter pang at seeing them go. The house was empty except for his bed, his chest of drawers, his book case and writing-table and a chair or two that his mother had left him. The things from Effie's cottage were to be moved into it the next day.

In the morning Catherine and Martha followed the furniture to Cheltenham, and in the evening of the same day Effie came to him.

XL

HE settled down into a quiet, continual happiness and peace, the happiness of having Effie with him in the house, of their going out and coming home together, of week-ends spent in the country, a thousand trivial and delightful things ; the peace that came partly from the possession of a sufficient income and partly from the absence of his mother. He woke every morning to the prospect of a perfect day and to the memory of perfect days.

Even in the long hours at the office he was happier. He found it easier and pleasanter to manage a big business than to keep its cash accounts ; it gave more room for his will and energy, and instead of hating his work he had begun almost to enjoy it. He was efficient, and he had a genius for evoking efficiency in other people. He had established a better system of advertising, and reorganised the work of the office so that it could be got through with the least possible effort and the greatest possible results. The staff adored him, and the business prospered beyond all the dreams that Mr. Godden had ever dreamed.

Arnold felt that he was paying back a small part of the debt he owed his friend.

He was reconciled even to the house that he had hated, to the rooms that Linda and his mother had filled with the memory of their unhappiness, the bedroom where Linda had lain awake beside him crying in the night for her baby, crying for her lover ; the nursery where the baby had played and where he had died (he could still see the tiny coffin standing on the table), the sitting-room where he had found his mother ready for him, fixed in her attitude of resentment and reproach. He had thought that nothing could do away with this insupportable air of suffering. But Effie had done away with it ; her presence in the house had cleared it of its memories. The place was happy again as it had been in his first year with Linda.

Living every day with Effie, he came to know the unchanging beauty and simplicity of her character. Effie could never have had a thought that was mean or selfish or insincere. Never a mood of indifference or discontent, never a word or a look that vexed him, but, day after day, the same unending wonder of her kindness. It seemed wonderful to him who, until Effie came, had never known what it was to receive as much as he had given, to be loved as Effie loved him.

When she came to live with him their union could no longer be kept secret from Winifred and Mrs. Godden. To his surprise, even Winifred accepted it as a simple and natural thing. They talked it over one Sunday after he and Effie had been lunching with the Goddens and they were all walking together over Parliament Hill Fields, Effie with Wilfrid and Winifred with Arnold.

"I don't say that it's right, Arnold ; but whether it's right or wrong I'm glad you're happy. You've had enough of the other thing."

"You don't hate me for it, then ?"

"No, Arnold, whatever you did I shouldn't hate you. I was sorry when you married Linda——"

"But you helped me to marry her."

"Did I ?"

"Yes. I've never forgotten what you did."

"What did I do ?"

"Don't you remember ? You asked your father to make it possible for me to marry Linda. Why did you do that if you were sorry ?"

"Because you wanted her. But I shall never forgive Linda for what she's done to you."

"You must forgive her."

"No. She took you. She took everything you had to give, and gave you nothing."

"She gave me what she could. It was my fault. I knew the risk and I took it."

"I don't care. I can't forgive her."

"You used to love her, Winny."

"Not after she left you."

They walked on a little way in silence. It was Winifred who spoke again.

"Arnold—if Linda wanted you to take her back now, what would you do ?"

"I should take her back."

"And leave Effie ?"

"Yes."

She turned her head, he saw her pale eyes looking at him through the big glasses. They wondered.

"Do you still love Linda, then?"

He paused before he answered. The truth was hidden from him and he had to look for it.

At last he said, "Yes."

"I thought you loved Effie."

"So I do. It doesn't bear thinking of."

"To love *two* women, like that—I should have thought it was impossible."

"So should I. But it isn't."

"If you'd married Effie you wouldn't have loved Linda."

"No. And if Linda hadn't left me I wouldn't have loved Effie."

"Effie's the woman you ought to have married."

"I'm so glad you like her."

"I love her. I love her because she's made you happy."

She was changed from the Winifred of seven years ago who had loved him in secret with a sad, fierce jealousy. He remembered her sadness, her fear, and her secrecy. He might know her secret now for all that she cared; she could hardly have told him more plainly that she loved him. She had done it so beautifully, so beautifully. And now for the first time he saw how great a thing Winifred's love was and how unselfish, how it had come through out of her sadness and fear and jealousy, and was clean. He saw that it was his own suffering and her pity that had cleansed it. And for the first time he was glad that she loved him.

The New Year, nineteen-three, had come. Arnold had been away for two days on business in Birmingham; his last idea had been to establish branches for Mr. Godden in the Midlands. He came back in an evening of January when Effie was at home waiting for him.

"Arnold," she said, "something's happened."

They were sitting together after dinner when she told him.

"Linda's in London."

His eyes winced under the sudden wound.

"It's all right," she said. "I've seen her; I've told her."

"How did she take it?"

"Like a lamb. Beautifully. She only wants you to be happy. She's glad because I've made you happy."

He sighed. The thought of Linda could still shake his heart. "She's with Schoonhoven ?"

"Yes. I don't think he'll leave her. He's got it into his head that he can't play without her. He'll stick to her as long as she can play. And she's playing better than ever. What we're afraid of won't happen."

"Not yet. Do you think she's happy with him ?"

"Yes. He excites her and tires her out. But she couldn't live without him. She lives on the excitement."

"I know. He's a habit, like drink."

"Arnold—I think it won't happen, but if it does, I won't be any trouble. I'll get up and go, thanking you for all the happiness you've given me. I shall thank you all my life."

He came to her and took her in his arms and kissed her.

Three years passed, nineteen-three, nineteen-four, nineteen-five. It was January, nineteen-six. Arnold was now forty-three. A few deep lines showed about his forehead, mouth and eyes, a few grey hairs above his ears. Effie said he hadn't changed.

Mr. Godden was ill ; he had come to the office as usual in the morning ; in the afternoon he began to complain of headache and shivering and pains in his limbs ; and he had gone home early. The doctor said it was influenza. That was on a Friday. On the Sunday Arnold said he would go over to Highgate and see him.

Effie was frightened. "Oh, Arnold, I wish you wouldn't !"

"Why ?"

"Because it's 'flu, and he'll give it you."

"He won't. He had it on Friday in the office. He'd have given it me then if he was going to."

"I wish you wouldn't go," she said again.

"I must. I must see the poor old thing."

"I know you'll get it," she moaned.

And he did.

He went to the office on Monday morning, and on Monday afternoon his head was aching furiously, he shivered and had pains in his back and limbs. He left early, and when Effie got home she found him in bed. He had a temperature that frightened her. She sent for the doctor and between them they kept him in the house for two days, but at the first lowering of his temperature he got up and on the third day he went back to the office. She couldn't keep him in. He said he and Godden

couldn't be away at the same time, and anyhow he was all right now.

It was a bitter, grey day with a wind like a knife, stabbing. And in the evening, as they came home, thick sleet and rain fell. He went shivering through the sleet and rain.

He didn't know how long he had been lying in the bed, whether it was days or weeks. Time slid by him with footsteps unmeasured and unheard. He had nothing to measure time by. Nothing happened, nothing changed. . . . He had only sensations that endured. Fiery headache on the top, and icy shuddering, stiffening cold inside him ; his whole body was one pain ; his ribs seemed to be clamped down with screws on to his heart and lungs, squeezing down his breath. He breathed in short, quick jerks, each one an agony ; every minute he thought he had no more breath to draw, it was like pumping up water from a shallow well, a well that was running dry, the last bubble of air breaking at the bottom. He coughed and it tore him. He was cold inside him, but his bed was hot and hard under his hips and spine. It was anguish to lie on it. It sank away under him, like the floor of a lift, sucking out his last breath as it sank. He gasped and panted.

He tried to listen to his heart-beats, but lost count, and became bewildered. Time bewildered him, his thoughts were scattered and lost in time. He knew what it was. Pneumonia. Double pneumonia. He had heard the doctor say it.

The bedclothes were stretched across his chest. Grave-clothes. A weight of grave-clothes. He lay in a coffin bed, bound down with grave-clothes, under a coffin lid, screwed tight, earth on the top of it ; he suffocated. When he tried to get out they pressed down the grave-clothes tighter, covering him. He couldn't get out.

That was the nurse, moving about the bed, a blur of white and blue. And that was Effie sitting there beside him. He could see her face and her sweet eyes looking at him ; she was the only thing in the room he saw clearly. Effie. Effie.

Every now and then he dozed ; he dipped into a shallow sleep, it rose up round him, drawing him in, he sank in it, deeper and deeper ; his breath came up bubbling and puffing ; sleep drowned him, sucking him down, smothering him. He woke with a jerk, gasping and panting. He was afraid to sleep lest it should suffocate him.

One evening when he came up out of one of these dozes, he

saw a face stooping over him. He saw it distinctly, the little discoloured, pushed-out, yearning mouth, the sallow white, crinkled cheeks, the eyes, small and faded, peering at him.

He started, stirred under the bedclothes, and said in a husky whisper that hurt him, "Mother."

"Yes, it's mother."

And Effie said, "Lie still, Arnold, and don't talk."

She put her hand on his forehead and his mother's face drew back.

He remembered. Effie and his mother. What was she doing there in the room with Effie? He wondered how she had got into the room.

Then he knew. She had come because he was dying. Effie had sent for her, because he was dying.

"With the key of softness unlock the locks . . .

"From the walls . . . From the walls of the powerful fortress'd house,

"From the clasp of the knitted locks, from the keep of the well-closed doors . . ."

Where did that come from? Where and when had he heard it? If he could only remember the rest. "Tenderly."

To die; to slide through the doors, let them fall to, softly, behind him; to go out; to have done with this fight for a little breath; to give up and go, out, out, to whatever there was there. God. God would be there and he would know him. He would see God. His mind was extraordinarily clear. He watched himself dying. He knew what it would be like. One last tearing breath, the last drop pumped up with pain from the bottom of the well, then no more.

It would be the easiest thing. There would be a falling down, the world sliding suddenly away from under you. Darkness. Then a heavenly peace. Then a new world arising inside you. New strange beauty. He would see it. In another hour, perhaps, another minute. He couldn't breathe. There would be one bubble of air to come after this one. The next minute. Yet somehow he went on breathing, he gasped, panted; something sucked the air back from his open mouth, yet he went on.

Ah, now——

A sound of crying came from beside the bed. Mother. Mother. That was the poor little thing crying, with moans and

hushed sobs that choked her. He turned his head away from her to the other side.

"Don't let him hear you crying."

That was Effie. She was crying too, but quietly, quietly; she didn't want him to hear. They were sitting, one on each side of the bed, looking at him, watching him die. Effie. Effie.

Then he knew that he didn't want to die. He didn't want to give up and go out. He wanted to go on living with Effie. Effie wanted him. He would hurt her, he would hurt her horribly, by dying. All his will rose up in him against death. He wouldn't die. He wouldn't give up and go out. He wouldn't. He wouldn't. He opened his eyes and looked at Effie. He could hear himself whispering, "Don't cry, Effie. I'm not going to die."

And Effie answering "No, Arnold, of course you're not." And his mother's thin, broken voice saying, "What's that he says? I didn't hear him."

"He says he's not going to die. And he isn't."

He fixed his eyes on Effie's face; it was the one sure and steady thing in the disappearing, disintegrating world. His mind hung on to it and it held him up. He built up his world again round Effie's face. He struggled with the darkness, he beat it back with his will, his eyes clung to the light that was Effie's face. He willed himself to live.

All evening and all night he kept on willing, willing himself to breathe, to live yet another minute, to go on living. And in the morning the doctor, who had said he was dying, said he would live.

"Any other man would have died. He's saved himself by sheer strength of will."

"My son always had a very strong will," said Mrs. Waterlow. She was proud now of the thing she had tried to wear down and conquer.

Three weeks after, when he was well again, he told Mary Unwin.

"I was going, all right. It was Effie saved me. I was just going off when I saw her dear little face looking at me and it pulled me back. In another minute I'd have been gone."

"What did you do to stop yourself?"

"I willed for all I was worth. Half the people who die needn't, if they'd only make up their minds not to. They just let themselves die. Nothing would have been easier than to

get away if I'd let myself. And for one minute I nearly did. I wanted to get away. I wanted so awfully to know what was there, what it would be like. You can't think how interesting it was, and how delicious it felt, slipping away, not caring whether I breathed or not. Just giving myself up, letting everything go. But I couldn't when I saw Effie. I thought how cruel it would be to leave her if I could possibly stay. Then I pulled myself back, back, just as I was slipping; it was like trying to keep awake when you're going to sleep. I knew the very minute when I was safe on this side. But I got near enough to the other side to know that that would have been safe too."

"Safer."

"Perhaps. There was a tremendous fascination about it. You felt that if you could only get away far enough you'd see God as he is."

"Yes, Arnold."

"But—Mary—it isn't possible. What do you mean by 'seeing' God? If he's a sort of Self, you can't see him as he is any more than you can see yourself. You can see his appearances, you can see them *in* him, somehow, and you can get an extraordinary sense of being certain that he's there. Do you remember telling me I should get it?"

"Yes, I remember. And have you got it?"

"I think so. A queer thing happened to me one day at Sidmouth. I was lying out in the garden, looking at the hills and the fields and the river—you know how you see them from the garden—and suddenly they all changed, I don't know how or why; one minute they were simply adorably beautiful, and the next, they were unearthly. There's no other word. They shone as if reality itself was breaking through them. I can't tell you what that sense of reality was like. I had the most astounding certainty."

"I know."

"Well, Mary, there it was. But I want to know what it all means."

"It means what you thought it meant."

"That it was a real thing? But was it? Once, when I was a kid, I thought I saw God up in the sky. I don't imagine that what I saw at Sidmouth was a bit more real than that. You see, it doesn't work for other people. Dear little Effie couldn't see what I saw. I could hardly make her believe it happened. I'm afraid it only happened inside me."

"My dear Arnold, where else could you expect it to happen?"

You believe that the world that everybody sees happens inside you and not outside, so why not the world you saw ? It is *as we see it*. If Effie could get into your state of mind she'd see it as you saw it."

"The queer thing is that I seemed to see it as it was."

"So you did. You saw more of its reality ; or, if you like, your mind, in the state it was in, made a world that was more real than the world Effie sees. You saw reality, not in yourself, but in God."

"That's what it felt like."

"Then why do you go back on it ? Why do you let your reason worry round it ? Why can't you accept the fact ? Say to yourself : It came, like that. I can't account for it, but it came."

"I'm afraid of being 'had,' of mistaking fancies for realities."

"Fancies don't feel like that, Arnold, they don't overwhelm you with their certainty."

"But as for seeing God—— You may have to go through an endless series of worlds, an endless series of experiences, without ever coming on him as he is."

"Don't bother about the endless series ; what does it matter so long as you know he's present in each thing as it comes ? You may go on and on and never find him, or you may cut through to him any minute. At Sidmouth you cut through. How do you know, if you died, you'd get any nearer than you were then ?"

"Eternal life might be a permanent state of seeing through."

"Yes. That was one moment out of your eternal life."

"It may never come again."

"It may never come again. But there's another way. You can fasten on to reality by willing, so that you can never get away from it. When you've given yourself up. When you've made God's will your will. It can be done, Arnold."

"I don't believe in giving up your will."

"You don't give it up. You get it again. God's will becomes yours. You exchange a weaker for a stronger will. Some day you may have to do it."

At that point Effie opened the folding doors.

"What are you two gassing about in there ?" she said.

"Metaphysics."

"Oh, Mary's metaphysics—I know them. It's a good thing he's got me here to keep him sane."

"Yes, Effie, it's a good thing he's got you."

XLI

ARNOLD's mother owned herself beaten. Effie's sweetness and goodness were too much for her. She couldn't stay for three weeks in the same house with her and not see that she was sweet and good. She accepted the fact without attempting to reconcile it with Effie's sin. Even Effie's sin took on another character in the light of her sweetness and goodness. Mrs. Waterlow thought of it now as the surrender of her weakness, not as the victory of her perversity over Arnold's weakness. She thought, not of Effie as seducing Arnold, but of Arnold as seducing Effie.

She watched Effie coming and going in the house and could find no fault with any of her ways. The nurse had gone in the second week of Arnold's convalescence and Effie took her place. Arnold's mother couldn't bear to see Arnold's mistress doing things for him, but she had to own she did them well. Effie wouldn't trust his meals to their little maid-servant ; she cooked them herself, deliciously, and served them with an exquisite neatness, and brought them to him herself. Arnold's mother had nothing to do but sit still and see him eat them. The sight of Arnold sitting up in bed, eating Effie's food, gave her a strange pang of tenderness and remorse. He had sinned, he and Effie had sinned together, but she had been hard and unforgiving ; and now she softened, she forgave them their sin. As long as Arnold was weak and helpless she forgave him ; his illness seemed to purify him somehow ; he had become what he had been before he had gone from her to Effie.

Then Arnold got well. He came downstairs ; he went for short walks with Effie and his mother. By the end of February he was going back to the office.

Mrs. Waterlow had hoped that Arnold's illness would have cured him for ever of his passion, that it was not for nothing he had so nearly died. But one night after his recovery, she saw them look at each other with shining eyes, with a sudden dark brilliance ; they spoke, and their voices had a thick, muffled

sound, and she thought : He's in love with her still. Nothing will cure him. And as the weeks went on the conviction grew on her with a frightful certainty that his old sinful life with Effie had begun again, and she felt that it was time for her to go. Her hardness and repugnance were coming back ; only instead of blaming Effie now, she blamed Arnold.

" Effie," she said, " I must go back on Friday."

" Go back ? You don't want to go back, do you ? "

" I don't want to *have* to go back, but I must. I can't stay any longer."

" But we want you to stay. To stay altogether. You know you're not happy with Charlotte."

" Who said I wasn't happy with Charlotte ? "

" Arnold. He knows."

" Charlotte is very good to me."

" Yes. But you aren't happy with her. And you have been happy with us. You know you have."

" You and Arnold have been very good to me."

" And you don't hate me as you used to do."

" No, Effie, I don't hate you. But I'm very, very sorry about you. I can't stay here and know that you're still going on as you were."

" I thought you'd got over it. I thought you'd seen that it was the only thing."

" I shall never get over it, my dear. I shall never see that it was the only thing."

" Is that why you're leaving us ? "

" How can I stay unless you give it up ? My staying would mean that I overlooked it."

" Well, can't you overlook it, just for once ? Just for Arnold and me ? "

" No, my dear, I can't."

" But surely you see it isn't the awful thing you thought it was ? Surely you know how we love each other ? "

" Yes. I see that. I know you've a better feeling for Arnold than I gave you credit for. I'm sorry I misjudged you, Effie. But it's sin, all the same ; you can't make me think it isn't."

" Well—can't you forgive us our sin ? "

" I have forgiven you."

" Forgive us enough to stay with us, I mean ? After all, what have I done, except make Arnold happy ? "

" If you ask me what you've done, I must tell you the truth.

You came between me and Arnold. You took my son away from me ; you're making it impossible for me to live with him."

"I didn't mean to come between you. And it's you who've made things impossible, not I."

"Arnold hasn't been the same to me since he knew you. I don't blame you, Effie, I blame him."

"He has. He's never turned against you. You haven't been the same to *him*."

"How could I be ? "

"It isn't only since he knew me. You never loved him the same as your other children. Not even when he was little. It was Richard you loved. And Arnold loved you ten times more than Richard and Charlotte ever did."

"He had a queer way of showing it. Arnold was never the same as my other children. He's given me ten times more anxiety than Charlotte and Richard. They wouldn't have done what he's done."

"You don't know him. You never knew him ; you never knew what he is. You don't know what he's done for you."

"No, my dear, indeed I do not."

"Then you shall know. He doesn't want you to ; he'd be furious if he knew I'd told you. But I don't care. I'm going to tell you. It's time you knew."

"You can't tell me anything about Arnold that I don't know."

"Do you know that Arnold makes every penny of your income ? "

"Makes it ? What do you mean ? "

"I mean makes it and gives it you. You haven't had anything for three years but what Arnold gives you."

"My dear, I have an income of my own of three hundred a year. Arnold hasn't anything to do with it."

"You don't know. You think it comes out of your capital. It doesn't. It comes out of Arnold's salary. You haven't got any capital. Richard speculated with it and lost every penny of it. Arnold never let you know. He was giving you all the salary he had, three hundred a year, and paying you besides for his board out of what he made by his writing. He only kept a very little for himself. He had to pinch and save and do without things he wanted and wear shabby clothes. And you thought he wasn't paying you enough."

"Is that true ? Did Arnold tell you that ? "

"Yes ; every bit of it's true."

" And Richard—Richard made away with my money, not Arnold ? And Arnold did all that for me ? "

She was crying now.

" He did all that for you. "

" And I never knew it. "

" Don't cry. Please, don't cry. He didn't want you to know it. I ought never to have told you ; but I thought you'd better know. "

" Yes. I'd rather know. You did quite right to tell me, Effie. But I'm ashamed. I'm ashamed. What can I do to make it up to him ? "

" You can go to him and tell him that you know. Tell him that you love him—like Richard. "

She opened the folding doors.

" Are you there, Arny ? Can I come in ? "

From her voice and from the childish name he gathered that his mother's mood was tenderness. He looked up, gentle and patient.

" Yes, mother. Do come in. "

" I'm not interrupting you ? "

He smiled and lied. " Not a bit. "

She stood before him, looking at him with a look he remembered ; the look she used to have when his father had been drinking, shy and humble, as if she asked him to forgive her.

He pushed forward the arm-chair by the fireplace, and she sat down. He turned his own chair round to face her. There were tears in her eyes, and he waited. She seemed to be gathering herself together to say something.

" Darling—what is it ? "

" Effie's been talking to me. " She paused.

" Well ? "

" She told me what you've done. "

" What I've done ? I haven't done anything. "

He thought it was another accusation, something that had vexed her. She went on.

" About Richard, and the money, and how you've been paying it back to me ; how you gave me all your salary, and worked and worked and went without things—for me. And I never knew. "

" Effie told you ? "

" She told me everything. "

" That was very wrong of her. She knew perfectly well you weren't to know anything about it. "

He scowled. For the first time he was angry with Effie. She had no business to give away his secret. He couldn't think what she meant by it.

"What on earth did she do it for?" he said.

"Don't be angry with her. She thought I ought to know it, and she was quite right. She did it to bring you back to me."

"I don't see it."

"She thought I didn't think enough of you. She said I didn't love you enough, I didn't love you like I love Richard. She wanted me to know what you were, and what you'd done for me. Oh, Arny, what you must have thought of me! But I never knew."

"Of course you didn't know, darling."

"But I ought to have known. You oughtn't to have kept it from me."

"I didn't want you to know about Richard."

"And I thought it was you."

"It was better you should think it was me than know it was Richard."

"But if I'd known, I could have done with less. You wouldn't have had to work so hard."

"I didn't want you to do with less. I liked working hard."

"That's why you went so shabby."

"I was all right."

"Oh, Arny, you've made me so ashamed. I oughtn't to be sitting here. I ought to be kneeling at your feet."

"Don't talk silly nonsense."

"It isn't, when I think of the things I said to you."

"What things?"

"About my keeping you, when you were keeping me."

"Oh—those things."

"And the things Charlotte said."

"Charlotte didn't know any more than you did. There's no good worrying about that, mother. You can't think how glad I am to do anything for you."

"Effie was right. I've never loved you enough. I've never, never seen what you were like, Arny. I've been so hard on you—always."

"Well, I've been an awful bother to you, haven't I?"

"If I'd only known——"

"Yes, but darling, how could you know? And I did a thing you hated. I couldn't expect you to take it as if it didn't matter."

"If there was anything I could do to make up, I'd do it."

"Well—there is."

"What?"

"You can try and love Effie a little. And you can forgive us."

"I do forgive you. And I do love Effie. She's a dear little thing. And I see that it isn't what I thought. You do love each other in a very beautiful way. Only it's very, very wrong of you to live together."

"It's very wrong of us; but we're forgiven. Let's leave it at that."

He rose and went to her. She rose too and put her arms up, holding on to the edges of his coat; he stooped and kissed her, and they stood clinging together like lovers.

"Poor little thing!" he said.

"Poor Arny!" She raised her head. "And poor Richard! Whatever he did, he did it for the best. You do believe that?"

"Of course I do."

She clung tighter. "I did love him best, because he came first. But I'll love you, too, Arny, just the same. There'll be no difference now between you and Richard."

All her pride was down before him. She knew him as he was. Her mind went back and back; she saw him as a child, running after her, and calling to her to stay; a child clinging to her, crying for her caresses. She had never satisfied his hunger for her love.

She saw him, still a child, going out to earn his own living, brave and patient over the work he hated, doing without things, glad because he could help her. And she hadn't seen what he was. She had never loved him enough. All her love she had thrown away on Richard who had given her nothing in return.

She thought of Rosalind. *She* hadn't loved him enough, either. Always he had had to go unsatisfied; he had never had what he wanted till Effie came. Effie was the only one who had loved him enough, who had given as he gave. She saw his love for Effie no longer as an unclean thing, but as part of his unselfish and protecting tenderness. There was something beautiful about it. Wrong and lawless; but that lawlessness was his only fault, the one flaw without which he would have been perfect. If it hadn't been for Effie she would never have known him. Effie had given her son back to her, perfect but

for that one flaw. She couldn't live with him ; that would have been to sanction and uphold their wrong-doing ; but she left, loving them, she forgave them and understood. She was reconciled to them at last, for ever.

XLII

ANOTHER year of the wonderful, incredible happiness. Effie's love was the only perfect thing that he had known, the only thing of which he could be certain that it would last for ever. It went its own way unspoiled, unhindered. His mother no longer came between him and Effie ; the old hostility was ended. Nothing remained of it but the formal disapproval which her little rigid, upright soul couldn't forego. Even from the silent protest of her absence all bitterness was gone, and every letter from Cheltenham had a postscript : " My love to Effie."

They were in the spring of nineteen-seven.

It was a Saturday, at the end of a perfect day, a white April evening, and he was sitting with Effie in the inner room, the doors folded ; they had settled down together, after a long bicycle ride, into the peace of the evening, aware of each other in the stillness before bedtime, a stillness without any words.

Their eyes had met in the first look of longing. They smiled suddenly in the same moment, and Effie spoke.

" To-day's been better than all the other days put together. There's been something about it."

" You've been happy ? "

" Frightfully happy."

" So have I."

" Arnold, if it goes on like this, getting better and better, what *will* it be like in twenty years' time ? "

" Anyhow, *we* shall be the same."

" Oh—I forgot. My hair'll be grey. Shall you mind that ? "

" Not a bit."

" There'll be crows' feet—awful ones—just here. Shall you mind ? "

" Not a bit. Look at me, now."

" I *am* looking at you. You've only got sparrows' feet. I adore them, and the dear little silver feathers above your ears."

It was then that the letter came, falling with a light flip into the passage.

He went out to get it. She could feel the passing of time before he came back. She looked up.

"What is it?"

"Linda."

One black line on a wide grey sheet. He read it slowly; and his face became white and drawn, as though he had come through a long time of suffering. She was frightened then.

"Arnold—what is it?"

He gave her the note.

"DEAREST ARNOLD:

"I am here. Will you come and see me?"

"LINDA."

It was written from Mary Unwin's rooms in Tavistock Square.

"Do you think she's come back?"

"I don't know. I must go and see her."

"Yes. You must go and see her."

They said no more. They were afraid of the sound of their own voices. A sudden immense fatigue weighed down on them. They went upstairs, slowly, with heavy feet. Till midnight they lay awake, pressed tight in each other's arms, their hearts beating together, beating violently in love and fear.

On Sunday afternoon he went to see Rosalind. He found her alone in Mary's room, waiting for him, as she had waited for him there twelve years ago.

She crouched among her cushions with her feet gathered up under her hips. As he came in she dragged herself up slowly and stood before him. Tall and slack, in utter weariness, she stood drooping, her head tilted slightly forward, her neck bowed from the shoulders.

She was changed. The edges of her face were soft and worn, bitten by pain. The moulded corners of her mouth were tight with pain. Her hair no longer hung over her forehead in a square fringe, but was parted and brushed back in two waves, giving her face a white, sleepless look.

And yet she wasn't changed. Rosalind showed no sign of being thirty-eight. She was marked, wounded, by grief and not by time. Through it all she kept her indestructible beauty and

her look of youth. Her face was a young face made white and tired by pain. Her eyes were young, light and clear under their black eyebrows, in their dark rings of pain.

By her pain he knew that she had come to him. Nothing but that, nothing short of the last wound could bring her back. Wounded, she had always come back to him, she had always wanted him. She wanted him now.

She smiled at him piteously, with the sad, beautiful mouth he knew. And at the sight of her and her sad smile, the past came back to him, the time that had been Rosalind's time, memory upon memory, covering up all that came between. He felt again the old infinite pity that had made one half of his love for Rosalind, pity that was passion, that had the power of passion, its magic and its thrill. It drew him again as it had drawn him, always, from the beginning. It drew him away from everything that came between, away from Effie, away from himself. Poignant and irresistible, it drew him from his happiness. He went back, he became again what he had been. With an intolerable overwhelming sadness he saw himself go.

She held out her two hands, with her old gesture of giving herself up, of giving all of herself to him at once.

He took her hands, and they stood looking at each other for a moment without speaking.

"You've come," she said at last. "But if you hadn't I should have understood."

"Of course I've come. Did you think I wouldn't?"

"No. No. I knew. I knew. You always said if I came back you'd be there."

"Well, I *am* here."

They sat down on the couch, side by side, as they had done that other time twelve years ago, when she had sent for him and he had gone to her.

"You needn't tell me why you sent for me."

"No. He's left me."

"Where is the brute?"

"In Paris."

"Then you've left *him*?"

"Yes. I've left him. But he told me to go. I was with him, and he turned me out."

He took her hand that lay, helpless, beside him.

"It's the end, Arnold. I've done with him. I shall never go back to him."

"Of course you won't."

"He's made it impossible. He was cruel. He said things. Awful things. You can't think how horrible he was."

"I can. I've always known him."

"I haven't. I never knew what he was like till now. I thought there were things he couldn't do. However beastly he was to me, I thought that underneath it all he cared for me. He used to care."

"Do you still want him to?"

"No. Never again. I've done with him. I haven't any feeling for him left. Not any at all. I've felt and felt till I can't feel any more. He's worn me out."

"You poor darling."

"Worn me out and smashed me to bits and thrown me away. I can't tell you what it's been like since I was ill."

"Ill? Were you ill?"

"Yes. First, I had neurasthenia. I couldn't stand the eternal racketing about. Then I got neuritis in my arm. My right arm. That finished me."

She held out her arm.

"Look. Feel. It hurts horribly and it's all stiff. I can't do anything with it. I shall never play again."

"Are you certain?"

"Certain. You see, that was it. He was angry because I was useless to him. He couldn't go on dragging me about with him all over Europe. He said I got in his way. . . . So I left him."

"It was the best thing you could do."

"Yes. But I'm done for, Arnold. Everything's been taken from me. I've got nothing. And it's all happened at once."

"Poor little Linda!"

It was all he could find to say.

A thought beat at the back of his mind. What next? What next? There was something that must come after this. Something that he had to do. But he shut his mind to it. He couldn't face it yet. He must see clearly first, without passion.

There was a long silence in which her face seemed to question him; it waited for his answer.

He had none to give her yet. His mind was held, immovable, between two passions. He knew what he was there for. He was there to take her back. She had sent for him to take her back; she was waiting for him to take her.

But, if he took her, he would have to leave Effie, to give *Effie up*. And he couldn't. He couldn't. Neither could he

leave Rosalind. That would have been treachery when she trusted him, when he had given her his word. Whatever he did, he must be cruel ; he must hurt one or other of them. But he could do nothing now. He must be calm and clear, free from this tangle of pity and desire. Pity for Linda. Desire for Effie.

If only it had been nothing but desire ; he could have fought that down ; he could have come through, clean ; but there was pity, infinite pity, for Effie, too. And pity for Effie was not to be fought down or put away ; when desire was done with it would still be there.

Rosalind was looking at him. Her sad face waited.

He waited, too. He knew that inside him there was another self, a calm, clear self that would judge between these pities. Only he must give it time.

Rosalind broke the questioning silence.

"Have you seen much of Mary ? "

"Oh yes, a lot. She's been awfully decent to me."

"She likes you."

"I hope she does."

"Has she told you about herself ? "

"Not much."

"She's been through what I have. There was a brute of a man. She was gone on him, frightfully, and he chucked her."

"I knew there was something."

"It was that. And yet she's happy and at peace. And look at me."

"You haven't had time ? "

"It isn't time. There's something else. She's got some secret."

"I know she has."

"And you know what it is."

"Yes."

"Tell me what it is."

"I can't tell you."

"You mean I wouldn't understand it."

"I mean I haven't got it. I can't give it you."

"You've got *something*."

"Not that."

She seemed to consider it a moment, then let it drop.

"And Winny—do you go on seeing her ? "

"Yes, rather."

"Dear Winny—— But she won't forgive me."

" Oh yes, she will."

" No. She loves you too much. So do I. I can't forgive myself."

" Don't think about that, Linda."

She looked at him and he saw that she was desperate. " Is Effie with you ? "

" Yes."

She looked away. She thought she had her answer. " Well — I'm going away to-morrow, to my father."

" How long shall you be away ? "

" About a week. I can't stand it longer. He loathes me because I left you. It's awful being with people who loathe you, isn't it ? "

" Yes. I must see you as soon as you come back. Something's got to be done. Only I can't do it till I've talked to Effie."

" Effie—Effie. But you can't do anything."

" Yes, I can."

" No. No, you can't. You mustn't think of me. You mustn't worry about me. I'm not worth it."

They had risen and she stretched out her hands to him again. He took them and they stood, holding each other at arm's length for a moment, then he drew her to him, gently, and kissed her.

" I shall see you again when you come back," he said.

He was alone in the house. Effie had gone over to Highgate and had not yet come back. Away from Rosalind and away from Effie he could think, calmly and clearly. He was alone with his real self, the calm, clear self, beyond passion, that would decide the matter for him without pity, without desire, without remorse.

It was not a question of cruelty to Rosalind or cruelty to Effie, of who would suffer more. It was a plain question of honour, of right and wrong. Rosalind was his wife, since he had not divorced her ; he had not even put her away in his thought. And in her thought he was still her husband, who had waited for her to take her back. She trusted him. He had given her his word. His word was the one fixed and certain thing in a world that had fallen away under his feet. To break faith with Rosalind would be the last treachery, treachery worse than Schoonhoven's, since Schoonhoven had betrayed no trust, since she had never been sure of Schoonhoven as she was sure of him.

To Effie he had given no such pledge. And he had not deceived her. She had known from the beginning that she held him only till the moment when Rosalind should come back. There had always been that danger, and they had gone into it with their eyes open, knowing the risk and taking it, not caring, glad of their happiness while it lasted. *Their* pledge, their contract, had been this separation. He had been unfaithful to Rosalind when he went to Effie. Unfaithfulness had not hurt her then, but to go on being unfaithful to her now—that would be the unforgiveable treachery. There was no turning of the ways ; he could see only one way before him, the straight way of his honour. His course had been determined for him long ago by that other self, in some high, spiritual place, beyond pity and beyond desire.

He heard the click of the latch, and Effie's feet in the passage. She came to him. He would have to tell her. Now. Now.

She sat down where she faced him. Her eyes looked into his. "You needn't tell me," she said. "I know."

"How did you know?"

"I knew the minute I saw you. She's come back. Schoonhoven's left her, and she wants you."

"Yes."

"And you're going to take her back."

Her voice was low and even. She asked no question. She stated, once for all, the irrefutable fact.

"There's nothing else that I can do."

"Nothing," she said.

"But I don't know how I'm going to do it."

"It's got to be done. Never mind how."

"I wouldn't so much if it weren't for you."

"You mustn't think of me. It's not as if we didn't know it would happen. . . . Look here. I never meant to come between you and poor little Linda. I never meant to take you from her, if she wanted you. What else can you do? You made her believe that you'd take her back. You made her certain. Think how she's trusted you. If you went back on her it would be like God going back on you."

"All this doesn't make it easier to leave you, Effie."

"It makes it impossible for you not to. After all, you've given me five years of happiness. You're not leaving me as Max left Linda. We shall go away loving each other."

"Effie, you're adorable. You're perfect."

"So are you. And I mean to keep you so. Perhaps this is

the way. How do you know this isn't the thing you wanted, the something beyond happiness ? "

" That's nothing if it isn't what *you* want."

" But it is what I want. Anyhow, it's what I choose. What I chose long ago. Because, Arnold, I knew it would happen."

" Did you, Effie."

" Yes. And you knew it too. It was always there, staring us in the face. And we knew what we should do. We knew it wouldn't be a question of happiness or unhappiness. It's a question of honour."

" I'm afraid it is."

" And your honour's my honour. After all, why shouldn't I have it too—the thing beyond happiness ? What's happiness worth if we can't end it beautifully ? Doesn't that help you ? "

" *You* help me."

" What else was I ever here for ? And now we've got to sit down and face it, and find out exactly what it means. We've got to give each other up. That's certain."

" That's certain."

" Does that mean that we can't go on seeing each other ? "

" Yes, if that'll make it easier for you, Effie."

" It won't make it easier for me. I shan't mind half so much if I can go on seeing you. But will it make it too hard for you ? "

" I'll take care it doesn't."

" If it does, I'll go away somewhere where you won't see me any more. We needn't bother about that till it happens."

" It won't happen. I can fight myself. And I won't be beaten, this time."

" I won't let you be beaten. I can fight, too ; and I won't be beaten, either. If we're not, you'll see there'll be lots of happiness left for us yet. I don't think Linda'll mind our seeing each other now and then. She wouldn't be so cruel."

" If we're not beaten, Effie."

" If—but we're not going to think of that. When have I got to go, Arnold ? To-morrow ? "

" No. We've got one week more. Linda's going away and she won't be back for another week."

They were not making things easier for themselves, and they knew it. Better to have gone from each other at once, in that first moment of exalted insight, desiring the spiritual thing beyond happiness, beyond desire.

" We're fools, Effie. Think how we'll have to pay for it."

"I don't care. Let's be fools. Let's pay. It'll be worth it."

With clear eyes they chose the poignant, dangerous bliss, to be followed by a sharper pain.

They had still seven days and seven nights together.

Effie went quietly about the business of her departure. She had taken rooms in Highgate, near enough to see Arnold from time to time, and far enough to mark their separation. Nothing happened, except that on the third day Effie caught a cold and wouldn't take care of it; she went aching and shivering to the office; she couldn't miss a day of it while they still had their hour of lunching together, of going and coming back together.

Four more days.

He counted them as they passed: the fourth day, the fourth night; the fifth, the sixth; then the last day, the last night. She lay beside him, so close that he could feel her body stirring softly against his in her sleep; he put his arm round her to hold her to him; she moved closer; at her soft stirring his heart swelled and beat tight with pain. To-morrow, to-morrow they would have nothing but the memory of this warm, sweet life. Her body felt weak in his arms and helpless, piteous, like a dying child's; so much of Effie would have died to-morrow. She lay there, sleeping her last sleep in her last night of happy life. To-morrow night she would be alone, in a strange room that she had never loved. And afterwards? Effie's future was dark and strange to him as a life after death.

There was a sound, stifled; a choking sound. Effie was not asleep, she was crying. She broke loose from him and lay, averted, her face pressed down into the pillow, smothering her sobs. Then, suddenly, she was still. Her breath came unevenly, in sharp, quick jerks. She turned and slipped back into his arms.

"It's all right," she said. "I won't do that again. It hurts."

"What hurts?"

"I don't know. Something in my side, when I breathe there"—she gave a little gasp—"like that."

"Effie—you're ill."

"No. It's only my cold. Don't kiss me. You may get it."

"I don't care if I do."

He kissed her, again and again, with a fierce passion and pity.

XLIII

In the morning Effie's cold was worse. She shivered and panted and showed a dangerous temperature. Her limbs ached and her head burned, her body was all hot outside and cold inside, cold that was like ice creeping and sliding up and down. Each breath was a sword drawn between her ribs.

She was dozing when he went to dress. But when he came back into the room he found her sitting, half-dressed, before the looking-glass, trying, with weak pitiful movements, to brush her hair. The brush slipped from her fingers.

"I can't," she said. "It hurts. Everything hurts."

He took her up in his arms and carried her back to the bed. For a moment her fingers fumbled, helplessly, with the buttons of her bodice ; then she gave herself up to him, like a child, and he undressed her. Her whole body seemed to give way at the unfastening of her stays, and he had to hold her up while he slipped off her vest and the last white sheath that clothed her, and put on her long white nightgown. His heart ached at the touch of her body, so slender and small under his hands, and breakable, like a child's.

When he had laid her in the bed he telephoned to the doctor.

She had given herself up ; she lay still, stretched out in the bed, and her white face had a look of composure and resignation, almost of satisfaction, as if she said, "After all, I haven't
I haven't left you."

And he, too, under his anxiety, was aware of an immense relief. She was ill, but he still had her with him ; they had cheated fate ; as long as her illness lasted he would have her there ; he could take care of her.

He went down and got her breakfast and brought it to her ; he raised her in his arms and held the cup to her mouth while she drank, and fed her bit by bit, with pieces of thin bread and butter. She ate from his hand with shallow bites like a little cat, and he watched her as he might have watched some small,

darling animal. She lay back in his arms, contented, her sweet eyes smiling at him over the rim of the cup.

He telephoned to Mr. Godden that he couldn't get away ; Effie was ill.

He watched the doctor sounding her back and chest. He watched him intently, fiercely, as if he thought that he would hide the truth from him. He followed him into the downstairs room and faced him.

"What is it ? Pneumonia ? "

"No. Pleurisy."

He was relieved. He had nearly died of pneumonia. Pneumonia had killed his father. But pleurisy he judged to be a lighter thing. You needn't die of it.

"That's not as bad, is it ? " he said.

"It's quite bad enough. Her heart's not strong and she's terribly run down."

"She was perfectly well a week ago."

"A week ago ? Are you certain ? "

"Absolutely. She caught cold four days ago and wouldn't take care of herself."

The doctor shrugged his shoulders. "Well," he said, "there you are."

He was sitting with his back turned to Arnold, writing prescriptions. He seemed to have withdrawn himself, to be holding back some frightful secret, keeping the truth from him.

"Is she going to get better ? "

The doctor frowned ; he tore up one sheet of paper and started on another. With a maddening deliberation he wrote out his prescriptions ; then he turned and answered.

"There's no earthly reason why she shouldn't. If she takes care. You'll have to have a nurse, though."

The nurse came at noon. She said that Effie would get better.

Effie resigned herself to getting better as she had resigned herself to getting ill. She smiled at Arnold and the nurse as they moved about the bed ; she lay there with her look of helpless patience, of waiting for something to be done for her, trusting them to pull her through.

"I am *trying* to get better, Arnold," she said one night as he watched her.

Then suddenly she left off trying ; she let herself sink. He could tell the moment when she had given in. She was looking at him with her tired eyes, eyes that had a mournful, dreadful

knowledge, that asked him to forgive her for not trying. It was as if they said, "It's no use. I can't keep it up. I'm too tired."

He remembered Rosalind. She would be back in London now, waiting to hear from him. He wrote to her.

"MY DEAR LINDA:

"Forgive me for not coming to see you. Effie's frightfully ill and I can't leave her. I can't do anything till she's out of danger.—ARNOLD."

He sat up with Effie night after night while the nurse slept. The nights were his least intolerable time; as long as he was with her, doing things for her, he had still that queer sense of satisfaction, a sort of happiness in agony. But when he was out of her room, alone with himself, his agony was more than he could bear. If Effie died—— If Effie died he couldn't think of himself as living. Beyond this moment when he still hoped there was darkness, and in that darkness nothing moved, nothing lived that could touch him. Not his mother. Not Linda. They had gone down out of sight in the annihilating darkness. There was no time beyond this moment when Effie still lived.

Everything told him of Effie's danger; the nurse's elaborate cheerfulness when she was in Effie's room, her hushed sadness out of it; the doctor's face. He had come early in the morning and at noon again and in the evening. Alone with Arnold he showed fright.

"I don't like it, Waterlow," he said. "There's something I don't understand. She isn't ill enough to be so ill."

"What don't you understand?"

"What's in her mind. There's something. She must have had some shock before she was taken ill. I'll swear there was something."

"There was."

"What was it?"

"My wife's come back and I've got to leave her."

"That's enough. That would do it. She's fretted herself into a state in which she'd have got anything. And now she's fretting herself worse."

"You don't mean—she can't get better?"

"She could if she would, but she won't. There's no reason why not. She's not half as bad as you were, and you pulled

through. You fought tooth and nail. But she hasn't any fight in her. She's simply letting herself die."

"But if *I* could live——"

"You wanted to live, and she doesn't."

"Then," said Arnold, "I've killed her."

"Nonsense! Don't get that into your head. You might as well say your wife's killed her."

"So she has. We've killed her between us."

"You've entirely misunderstood what I said."

"At least it followed. If you meant what you said you meant that."

"I meant nothing of the sort. It doesn't follow. You're no more responsible for her illness than I am. She caught cold, and she got pleurisy, and nothing on earth could have stopped her getting it."

The doctor was angry. Angry with himself for his indiscretion, and that made him angry with Waterlow for what he called his misunderstanding. Angry because Effie's illness wasn't taking the course he had predicted.

"What's the good of speaking if one's words are to be twisted that way?"

"It doesn't matter. Whatever you said I should have thought it."

Arnold turned from him wearily. He wanted him to go, and presently he went. He was sorry for him then. After all, the poor man had done his best to save Effie and was furious with himself because he had not saved her.

When he had gone, Arnold switched off the light and sat in the dark, alone with himself, thinking.

There was a calm, clear self that absolved him; it told him that Effie's illness had followed from her unhappiness, and her unhappiness had followed from his decision, but his decision had followed from a thing that had happened beyond and against his will. He had done what he had to do, and could have done nothing else.

And his dark, troubled self, the self of passion and pity, refused absolution; it gave itself up to a remorse that would last for ever. He had done what he had to do; but it had been he who had done it, and it had killed Effie.

He went up to sit with her.

The nurse stood in the doorway, laughing with her eternal cheerfulness.

"I'm not afraid to leave you with Mr. Waterlow. He's a better nurse than I am ; and you're happier with him."

Effie turned her head. "You don't mind, nurse ? You're a very nice nurse ; but you're not Arnold."

"Bless you, of course I don't mind." She went, laughing.

"She's a dear," said Effie. "But I'm glad she's gone."

He switched off the light ; the night-light blinked and sputtered in its saucer on the table at the foot of the bed ; it cast a yellow disc on the white ceiling. He sat down beside the bed where she could still see him as she lay.

It was at midnight that the flash came to him. It came to him suddenly, the thought that if he had saved himself he could save Effie. He had been nearer dying that time than Effie was at this moment, and he had dragged himself back. He had willed to live, and he had lived. Then he could will that Effie should live, and she would live. If his will were strong enough. He remembered what Mary had said to him. Prayer was willing, and it was something more. It was a secret, mysterious act of union with God. Your will became God's will. When you really prayed, then you were strong, then you could do things. A secret, mysterious act. He wondered how you accomplished it. There must be some state that you got into first. He wondered what it would be like. He supposed it would be secret and mysterious, too. In all his experience there was nothing that gave him the clue to that secret and that mystery, though his whole soul was set on finding it out.

And while he wondered it came to him. He had shut his eyes and made darkness round him ; he was staring intently into the darkness, as if the thing he looked for were hidden there in the heart of it. At its first movement he gave himself up to it, he gave up his wonder and his will. In wave after black wave it came over him, flooding his senses and his thought. He had no thought but of giving up his will, and no sensation but of that streaming and enfolding darkness. It was as though the weight of his body had been lifted, and he were enclosed and supported by the flood. And now he was aware of an intense vibration, as if some cord drawn out from his innermost being had touched the object of his desire.

He had not found it, the secret and mysterious thing ; it had found him ; suddenly it came down to him through the darkness, rushing ; it mingled with him and possessed him. His innermost self went out to meet it, and closed with it and was at peace. Secret and mysterious, like a thing known long ago

and forgotten, it came back to him and he received it with a shock of recognition. This was reality. Only reality could give him that sacred, incommunicable certainty.

Supposing he put it to the test ? Why had it come to him now, at this moment, if he couldn't use it to save Effie ? Already his innermost self was one with the secret and mysterious thing, his will had become God's will ; he had only to make the darkness come again, to give himself up to it, and will. Surely it would work, if it were a real thing.

The darkness came again, and for a moment he felt that his will vibrated with its vibration, and made a way through it and was carried on wave after black wave, vibrating, to its end. He gathered all his will together to get through. Then suddenly it stopped, it was pushed back, he felt it beating against an impenetrable wall, a blank barrier set up before the ultimate mystery. It wouldn't work. He couldn't get through. The darkness broke up and sank away from him, and he felt again the weight and pressure of his body, cutting him off.

He opened his eyes. Effie was awake and looking at him.

" I know what you've been up to," she said. " I wish you wouldn't."

" How did you know, Effie ? "

" I could feel you. I wanted to get away and I could feel something tugging at me and trying to pull me back. You were tugging, weren't you ? "

" Yes, Effie."

" You mustn't. It's not kind of you to keep me when I want to go."

" Effie—darling—— "

" You mustn't mind my going ; you mustn't, really. It doesn't matter. We've been frightfully happy. And I've seen it—the thing you wanted—the thing beyond happiness. We've seen it together. There isn't anything more."

She shut her eyes and lay still. And in a little while she opened them again. She was saying something.

" Arnold, I'm not exactly frightened, but I don't feel safe. The bed keeps slipping away."

He came to her.

" I think if you'd hold me I should feel safer."

He put his arm round her and held her up. " Do you feel safer now ? "

" Yes. Ever so safe."

She lay back in his arms ; her head rested on his shoulder ;

but every now and then it sank, dropped forward, raised itself again and sank again in utter weakness.

The striking of the church clock sounded loud through the hushed house. Eleven o'clock, the quarter, the half-hour. Effie woke up.

"Arnold—are you tired holding me?"

"No, darling, no."

She laid her head back on his shoulder. "I'm not afraid. You don't know—how I—love you."

At midnight she died.

Rosalind's letter came the next morning.

"DEAREST ARNOLD:

"I'm so sorry about darling Effie. I'm afraid she's been fretting. Tell her it's all right. You haven't got to take me back. I won't let you. I never meant to take you from Effie. I couldn't bear to make her unhappy, or you, dearest. I've done enough to hurt you without that.

'You're not to worry about me. I shall be all right. I'm going to live with Mary. That's what you'd like me to do, wouldn't you?

"Always your loving
"LINDA."

He wrote back:

"MY DEAR LINDA:

"Effie died last night. I know you'll be sorry
Thank you for your letter—ARNOLD."

XLIV

SEVEN months passed.

His grief grew heavier with time by all its weight of accumulated memories. If only he could get away from Effie's death ! If only the dead died once ! He remembered Linda's cry when their child died : " If it had only happened once, but it keeps on happening all the time." This was Effie's real death, this reiterated, undying death that went on in his memory. Again and again he held her in his arms, he saw her head drop forward and hang slack on his breast, he felt her body stretch itself out in the last surrender, he heard the sound of her dying, the groaning sighs of her last breath.

It was not there that she died, in the white bed, in the green-curtained room, where the fire flickered in the grate ; it was not there that she died, and not then, in the April night, but here, in the thick November twilight, where the wet path went dark under the beech-trees, where the rain hung in rows of clear beads from the branches, and the fallen leaves sounded like surf under his feet. He always thought of her as dying when he walked here. In other places she came back to him living and happy ; he saw her darling face with its sudden wide smile and the tender falling curve of its white chin. At night she came to him with soft arms round his neck and kisses.

Only in his dreams she was cruel ; she tricked him, going from him through endless doors that she shut between them ; turning into Linda or his mother. Or she would appear before him on the landing and sign to him to follow her into their room, and he would find her lying stretched out on the bed and covered with a white sheet. This dream was horribly distinct. He could see the clear drift and dip of the sheet above the ankles, and the sharp, puckered hollows in the pillow where the weight of the head sank down. The dead face struck cold under his hand, with the hard impact of reality.

In this agony it seemed to him that his spiritual life was at an end. Sometimes he loved God and longed for him with all the strength of his innermost immaterial being. Sometimes he hated him and turned from him ; he thought of Effie's death as the unforgiveable cruelty of God. He remembered Spinoza : " God loves himself with an infinite intellectual love." Infinite, everlasting Egoist. And : " The intellectual love of the mind towards God is part of the infinite love wherewith God loves himself." Did God, then, hate himself with an infinite hate ? Hated or loved, the secret, mysterious thing had hidden itself, and, try as he would, he couldn't get back to it. It behaved with an inscrutable caprice. For one moment, in its own divine darkness, secretly, mysteriously, it had found him and possessed him, and now, secretly, mysteriously, it had cut him off.

Besides that anguish of heart and spirit, he had no peace of mind because of Rosalind. He would have to take her back ; it was inconceivable that he should not take her back. Yet this simple, inevitable duty seemed to him now so hard as to be beyond his power. He couldn't bear to live with another woman, not even with Rosalind, after Effie's death. But if he failed her, the whole spiritual purpose of his life would have failed. And it would be treachery to Effie, too, since Effie had said that his honour was her honour, since to both of them the " something beyond happiness " had come to mean precisely this obedience to honour.

He had not seen Rosalind since Effie died. She had been hardly a month in the Tavistock Square rooms before she and Mary had gone away to live somewhere in the country. It was as if she had wanted to make it easier for him.

He had one consolation. At least he could provide for her. Mr. Godden had taken him into partnership that summer, and out of his larger income he had given her more than enough to live on. She had taken it, knowing that that, too, would make it easier for him.

Now and then she wrote to him, telling him that she loved their house and garden, and the country round Stow-on-the-Wold, and that people were kind to her. He wasn't to worry about her. She was all right.

And Mary Unwin wrote and told him the truth. Linda was unhappy. She was waiting for him to end her unhappiness. " I keep on telling her she must give you time."

Yes. He would end it, but she must give him time, a little more time.

And the months went on. It was April again, a year from Effie's death.

He had been talking a long while with Mary Unwin. Mary had kept on her rooms in Tavistock Square and from time to time she came to London. But Rosalind never came.

"You see, it doesn't work," he said. "It broke down."

"That means that you prayed for Effie to live."

"Yes. And you see how I was answered."

"If you asked for yourself, simply to keep her with you, perhaps you couldn't be. But if it was for Effie, you *were* answered. You asked that she should live and she was given eternal life. . . . Half your trouble comes from thinking of death as a bad thing, as a bad thing for Effie. How do you know that it wasn't the best thing that could happen to her? It seems to me quite clear that it was so. She was saved the agony of separation, and she saved you and Linda. You don't imagine that Linda could have been happy knowing that she had come between you? And *you* were saved from a terrible struggle with yourself."

"I think I might have come through that part of it."

"I know you would. So there was no need to put you to the test. No need for Effie to live."

"Or for me, either."

"No, Arnold. We don't die before we've done with life. Effie had done with it, and you haven't."

"Effie? She loved life, she loved the earth and everything she could see and touch and hear. Things were intensely real to her. You can't think of her without them."

"Yes, but she'd got all she could get out of them. She had learnt all that she could learn through loving. Life had nothing more for her. She's gone on to the next thing. Try and think of it like that."

"I do try. Either Effie's death was a piece of brutal, senseless cruelty, or it had some eternal significance. If only I could see it."

"I can see it. You say she wanted the something beyond happiness. Supposing this was the only way she could get it? And supposing it was the only way she could get it for you?"

"For me?"

"Yes. All your life you've been trying to know God. That's been the end of all your thinking. You're so made that

nothing but God will ever satisfy you. What if losing Effie were the only possible way for you to find him ? ”

“ I haven’t found him. I’m further off than ever.”

“ You think so. And we’re never so near to him as when we think we’re far. You never wanted him so much as you want him now, did you ? ”

“ No.”

“ Well, you’ll soon have what you want, and it’ll never be taken away from you. But, before you can have it completely, everything else has to be taken away. You must have nothing, so that you can have only It.”

“ That’s terrible, Mary.”

“ It’s terrible, but it’s true. At any rate it’s true for you and me. There’d be no sense in life or death, Arnold, if it weren’t so.”

“ It sounds too much like the old over-ruling Providence. I don’t believe in an over-ruling Providence.”

“ Nor I. I don’t believe in an over-anything. If God isn’t in us he isn’t anywhere. We can’t go on for ever without finding what’s in us.”

“ Some people do.”

“ Their for ever may have only just begun. . . . There’s another thing. You’ll never have any peace, Arnold, till you’ve taken Linda back.”

Never so near God as when you think you’re far from him——

If that were true he needn’t be afraid of not finding God. He couldn’t be farther away from him than he was now. There could be no darkness blacker than this darkness, no pain of separation sharper than this pain. The darkness was empty and still, nothing lived, nothing stirred in it, no form was there and no sound, not a word of the secret. Nothing but nothing. Night after night he stripped his soul bare ; he plunged into the darkness ; his will struggled to break through to the thing he longed for ; and there was nothing there. He might go on and on through it for ever and ever, and there would be nothing there.

Yet he remembered. Once in the darkness Reality had found him and possessed him utterly, at any moment it might break through and find him again. Unless there was something in him that came between.

He lay in another room, in a bed where Effie had never lain. Night after night, when he stripped his soul, he had put from him the thought of Effie. Her image had never gone with him into the darkness. Reality was beyond all passion but the

immortal passion for Itself ; it was beyond grief, beyond despair.

It was beyond grief. In the place where it was grief could not be. This then was the thing that had come between him and God. Mary's truth was not all the truth. Sorrow might bring you half-way to God, but it kept you for ever from the last supreme encounter. His soul was so filled with grief that there was no room for God in it. And there was something more, something that he had known long ago and forgotten.

"He who loves God cannot endeavour that God should love him in return."

Nothing counted but the incorruptible desire to know whether God is not or is.

He must give up himself. This was the tremendous secret. This was what he should have willed in the beginning ; deliverance from the self that grieved and longed and struggled for its peace.

He gave himself up now. He willed his deliverance. He stripped himself of everything save the bare will to know Reality. His will waited in the darkness, effortless and still.

Quietly, before he was aware of its coming, It had come. Something stirred in the darkness ; he was conscious, again, of a queer, still throbbing, subtle and strange, as if his whole being were set to a finer pitch of vibration ; then stillness again ; then an incredible happiness and peace, and the sense of irrefutable certainty.

Then the divine thing hid again in its darkness. But the peace and the happiness lasted till he fell asleep.

This time his certainty remained with him clear and undiminished. If he wanted proof of the unspeakable experience, he had it. In one moment, his will, after a year of bondage, had been set free.

He had come to the end of his long seeking. The God he had found last night was more than the object of his metaphysical thinking, the Thought of thought ; more than the Reality seen in the sudden flash of his mystic vision ; closer than thought or seeing, he was the Self of self, the secret, mysterious Will within his will. Where It was, there could be no more grief.

XLV

AND with the passing away of his grief everything that had stood between him and Rosalind passed away, and his heart turned to her again. He had no use for a happiness and peace that shut her out. He knew that he loved her and, but for that year of misery, had never ceased to love her ; through all his unfaithfulness he had been faithful to her in his heart. She drew him again as she had drawn him in his youth ; and it was as if, tenderly, pitifully, Effie had let him go.

Three days later he went down into the country to bring Rosalind back.

The small grey house stood sideways on the slope of a hill, at right angles to the road that went down it. Mary was alone. Linda, she said, had gone up into the field. He would find her there.

She went with him down the hill, up a steep bank and through an iron gate into a green field. The path turned up the hill through another gate. Mary left him there.

" You've only to follow the path," she said, " and you'll come to her."

He followed the path. It went on, a dark band on the bright green grass. At the top of the field he saw Rosalind.

She sat on a low bench, facing him. Her head was lifted and she was looking intently at something beyond him. Suddenly she started up ; she had seen him and was coming towards him, slowly, with no smile nor any gesture, as if she were not yet sure that it was he.

" Arnold—it is you."

" Yes. Did I frighten you ? "

" No. But I was afraid. I was afraid it wasn't you."

" Afraid ? "

" Yes. I was afraid you'd never come."

He sat down beside her. " I know it's been a long time. But I couldn't come before. I was too unhappy."

" I know you were," she said.

Then they were both silent.

The gate in the stone wall behind them clanged. Two girls passed them, laughing, breaking their silence, and Linda spoke again.

" Why didn't you tell me you were coming ? "

" Because I wanted to find you like this."

" This is where I wanted you to find me. It's the place where I've always seen you coming to me."

" Then you've thought about me ? "

" I'm always thinking about you. But I can think best here. You see how beautiful it is."

The hill dropped to a hollow pasture set with trees ; beyond, the land rose in curve upon curve of many-coloured fields. There had been a light fall of snow the week before, but it had melted and the ploughed lands and the fallows were dark with thaw. Against their darkness the trees and the new grass and the young corn showed a shining green. The mist of the thaw lay like a thin sheet of grey glass over all. Above the hills the sky was the colour of green turquoise.

He saw how beautiful it was. And Rosalind's face, looking at it, was beautiful. The dark, brooding, sorrowful passion had gone from it for ever.

" You know what I've come for ? "

She looked at him, as if by looking she could get the certainty she wanted. " I'm not sure," she said. " I told you I was afraid."

" You were afraid I wouldn't come, and I have come."

" To take me back ? "

" No. To ask you if you'll take *me* back."

" Arnold——"

" Will you ? Will you try and love me again ? "

" I've always loved you. Only I didn't know it till you went to Effie. *Then* I came back to you. Always when Max made me unhappy I thought of you and wanted you. You don't know how I wanted you. I was glad when you went to Effie, because then I knew."

" You came back, you came back long ago ? "

" Long ago."

" Why didn't you leave him then, Linda ? "

" I couldn't as long as I could help him and he wanted me. You forget—I loved him, too."

" You loved him because you could take care of him. Do

you remember saying you couldn't take care of me and you didn't want me to take care of you ? ”

“ Yes. It isn't true, now.”

“ It ~~isn't~~ true. And you'll come back with me to-night, Linda ? ”

“ You aren't afraid to take me back ? ”

“ No. I'm not afraid.”

“ You know I'll never leave you ? ”

“ I know.”

That night she went back with him.

THE END

